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BY

VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND

AUTHOR OF "A BOSTON GIRL'S AMBITIONS" "ONLY GIRLS" "THAT QUEER GIRL" "A WOMAN'S WORD" "DARRYLL GAP" "LENOX DARE" ETC.

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To Her

WHOSE YOUNG LIFE WAS UNFOLDING INTO A WOMANHOOD,
LOVELY AND NOBLE, LIKE THE ONE I HAVE TRIED
TO PORTRAY IN THIS BOOK.

TO MY SISTER,

Emily Florence.

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"Call me thy foe in thy passion, claim me in peace for thy friend;
Yet, bethink thee by lowland or upland, wherever thou willest to wend,
I am thine Angel of Judgment, mine eyes thou must meet in the end."

THE IDEAL.

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MOSTLY MARJORIE DAY

I

A TALK AND WHAT HUNG ON IT

"DOCTOR!"

The voice was a woman's — a clear contralto — the dissyllable alive with surprise, welcome, gladness.

The man standing in the bay-window had not caught the light, swift movement behind him. He turned quickly at the word, and his gaze encountered a young, slender woman, rather above medium height.

The beautiful head was covered with short tendrils of the softest brown hair, which flashed into bronze and amber whenever a sumbeam had a chance at them. The face had a delicacy of modelling and tint which could not have escaped a fine observer. The eyes — one forgot the rest of the face looking into them — were large, and of that rare dark-gray shade which is always deepening into brown. The mouth, while it accented the character of the face, had certain decided lines among the sensitive curves.

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The dress was the simplest imaginable; yet, had you seen the young woman for the first time that morning, you would have felt she ought never to wear any other. The gown was a white flannel, falling in long, close folds about the figure, and fastened at the throat with a bar of dark, richly veined agate.

There was a little silence. The doctor's intent, searching gaze took in all the finished lines, the flower-like bloom, while to him another face hovered and glimmered ghostlike beside this one, — a white, pallid, motionless face, like those on which tears are rained, and quivering lips pressed, for the last time. For the shadow on that other face, which, dim and wavering, the doctor saw, was like the shadow of death; and it was Death with which he had had that long, hand-to-hand wrestle for the young life that was now throbbing and glowing before him.

"Miss Marjorie!" He put out his hand with the words. A great gladness shone in the keen eyes under the beetling brows. A physician — one of the nobler sort — could only have entered into his feeling at that moment.

"Did you get my letter?" inquired the young woman.

"Last evening. I made it the first business of the morning to drive over here."

"That was like you. But even I had not looked for such promptness."

"My dear child, the sight of you, as you stand

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there, would repay me a thousand-fold for something more than a five-mile drive through this glorious June morning."

"I must be a contrast to the shadowy creature you allowed to go away from you last winter. I observed all the conditions religiously, you see."

"I see. And now you are quite well, Miss Marjorie?"

"Well in every fibre and molecule!" Her laugh rang out, making a sudden gladness in the air. "I don't believe even you ever had a patient who would do your skill more credit."

He bowed at that. He was a tall man, built on a large model, with rather rugged features, but with something grand about his face, about his whole presence. There was a heavy frost in his hair — a still heavier one in his beard. His years, which he carried bravely, were deep in his sixties. When you had seen his bow, you would have known Dr. Amoury, though he was content with his wide, unambitious, country clientele, was familiar with elegant drawing-rooms.

"It is just six weeks ago," Marjorie Day resumed, "since I left off my wig. You are a man, and therefore, of course, can but dimly enter into all that event must be to a woman. My head was covered with a soft, curly mat of rings, just like a baby's. I laughed and cried when I first saw them. And now just see what a thick yellow mane I am growing!"

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She shook her head with gay playfulness, and all the bronze and amber lights leaped and flashed among the rings of hair.

"Yes; it is a magnificent second crop," rejoined the doctor, and his smile gave the serious face almost a boy's brightness. "I think it is going to outdo the first one."

The room where the two stood, was a wide, rather low-ceiled parlor, with a distinctly home-like atmosphere. Lounges, sofas, easy-chairs, were scattered about in a way that indicated frequent use. The summer boarding-house, which had opened only the week before, was patronized by a class of quiet, substantial people. At this time there had been but few arrivals. Among the first of these was Marjorie Day. She had come a few days before, taking her hostess by surprise. The young lady had been here the previous season. She had contracted the typhoid epidemic, which, during the autumn, had raged among the hills and valleys of that northern section of Massachusetts. Dr. Amoury, the physician in a town adjoining Briarsley, where the young woman was staying, had, so the talk ran, saved her life.

There was a soft stir of summer winds outside. The scent of some great, pink-flowering rose-bushes came into the window. It was just that sweet, spicy fragrance which filled the rooms when our grandmothers dressed their mantels with the roses of the century's early summers.

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That large, restful room, soon to be filled with groups of people, with life and merriment, was just the place for a long, confidential talk. The few guests had gone for a morning's drive.

On this talk Marjorie Day had greatly set her heart. She had gone over the matter many times in her thoughts; but now that the long-looked-for moment had come, her courage faltered. The motives which had brought her to Briarsley, and which had seemed sufficient and reasonable, grew vague, elusive, and absurd. How could she make all which had been at work in her heart and brain clear to the man before her? Yet he was the only one to whom she could possibly lay bare her feelings at this time.

The doctor, with his quiet, penetrating gaze, soon caught some inkling of what was in her thoughts. He understood women as few physicians (even of wide experience) do. This was not owing wholly to his professional life. He had been the husband of two women. The influence of one had darkened and imbittered several years of his life, and that of the other had brightened and sweetened later years with all that is loveliest and divinest in womanhood. A life with these experiences must have held an intense drama. But it is not that of Ambrose Amoury which I have now to relate to you.

It was natural a suspicion that some man must be at the bottom of whatever Marjorie Day had to tell him should flash across the doctor's mind. Her

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letter had spoken of needing his sympathy and counsel. He had learned much of this young woman during her long illness and convalescence. He was eager to serve her with any means in his power.

"Will you sit down?" asked Marjorie, after a little talk which rippled and sparkled about the surfaces of things. "I have a great deal that I want to say."

"And I shall be able to give you my undivided attention for the next two hours," he replied, as he drew a large easy-chair for her near the window, and seated himself in another.

She turned and faced him in silence for a few moments. Her eyes had a half-doubtful, half-appealing look.

"If it is a man, he is not the man for Marjorie Day," thought the doctor.

Her speech broke out passionately at last: —

"I have said to myself so often: 'If I could only see him, only tell him — everything! His wisdom, his experience, his goodness, would help me.' I felt you were the only man in whom I could possibly confide, the one, too, who would not, in his secret soul, imagine I had lost my wits."

"You were right in your last conclusion, Miss Marjorie."

"It was just for that purpose — the seeing you — that I bore down all opposition and came to Briarsley. Yet it all seems so wild and absurd now, so impossible to begin to tell you!"

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His next remark struck a new note.

"I will not tell you, Miss Marjorie, that I feel honored by your faith in me. There is a reason, too, why I should regard your confidence as something especially precious and sacred — a reason which I have sometimes wondered whether I should ever think it wise to tell you."

She flashed a surprised, puzzled look into his face.

"I am wholly in the dark," she said at last, half to herself.

"Of course, when I am alluding to an event which nobody in the world is aware of but myself. And yet it was a matter of life and death to you!"

Marjorie knew the man sitting there. He never used words for effect. She leaned forward with eager interest. "Tell me, please," she said.

His face and voice were graver when he resumed. "It happened last fall, when the epidemic was at its height. Among my patients there were three within a mile, each of whom lay at the point of death. One of these was an old man approaching his eighties. Another was a boy of twelve; the third was yourself, Marjorie! I had scarcely allowed myself a nap for a week. At last my strength began to yield. It was hopeless to think of helping others until I had given myself a couple of hours' sleep. This broke the nervous tension at which I had held myself for days. The question which faced me when I awoke was to which one of my three patients I should go

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first. A life might hang upon my decision. But how was I to know? I remember how the chill November wind moaned dismally among the branches, and what a long, straight bar of cold yellow light stretched across the western horizon, as I put my mare into a sharp trot. At a point where the roads forked my decision would have to be made. Had it been a matter of personal preference it would have been easy to decide. But what physician, with lives at stake, could allow his feelings to have a feather's weight at such a time?

"All of a sudden I heard a sound on my right — a child's loud, sobbing cry of terror and peril. An instant later I had turned off into the river road, and was dashing over the ground, while one shriek after another rang through the gloaming. In two minutes the mystery was cleared up. I caught sight of a small child hanging to a branch of black ash, which grew on the river bank. His feet were dangling in the water into which, had he fallen, he would certainly have drowned. A small row-boat, rocking on the water a few yards from shore, explained the whole situation. The child — he could not have been more than five — must have wandered to the bank and scrambled into the boat, which the current had borne away. In his fright he had seized one of the low branches, while the boat had drifted from under him. The branch to which he clung was slender, and threatened every instant to give way, while he

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was on the point of dropping from sheer exhaustion. Of course I was out of the buggy in a flash, rushing down the bank and shouting to the boy to hold on. I managed to rescue him, though he dropped insensible into my arms. By the time I had the little runaway in the buggy his eyes were open and he was able to tell me where he lived. I carried him to a farmhouse half a mile away, and, with some hasty explanations, placed him, wiser and sadder after his first bout with the world, in his mother's arms, herself scared into hysterics.

"Before I had the reins again in my hands I had reflected that a cross-road among the hills would carry me to you in less time than I could reach my other patients.

"When, a few minutes later, I saw my young friend, I feared she would never smile on me again. Indeed, I doubted whether, with that faint, thready pulse, she could survive the night. The nurse had done her best, but the disease had reached a crisis which baffled her. There was a hard struggle at your bedside that night, — one of the hardest in my long experience; but, when I went out into the gray twilight of that autumn morning, I knew that the sleep from which you would awake would not be the sleep of death."

In the silence which followed they both heard the winds, like low laughter, among the rose-bushes by the window.

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"You see, I had not intended to tell you this story," Dr. Amoury resumed in a different tone. "You must justify me for doing it now."

Her low, hurried question did not answer his remark. "But those other lives — what became of them?"

"The old man was gone before I reached you. The boy's fever turned at midnight. I was not required in either case."

She bent toward him now. The question was in her eyes before it had passed her lips, "Was my life really worth saving, do you think?"

He knew that with a temperament like hers, so full of abounding vitality, so alert and responsive in a wide and varied range of interests, such a question must have grave meanings behind it. It did not spring from a mood, a vein of morbidness, or a touch of sentimentality.

"This time, Miss Marjorie," he said, with a certain quality in his tone which always impressed his hearers, "you have asked me a question which your future can only answer."

There was a brightening of her whole face.

"There is not another man in the world who would have replied to me as you have. My instinct was right when I came to you."

Of course this reply left him as much in the dark as ever regarding the especial matter in hand. But his next question was a very practical one.

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"You spoke in your letter of your friends' wish that you should join them at Newport for the summer?"

"And since I wrote, other invitations have come for Bar Harbor, and a month at the Profile."

"It strikes me all that must be rather an embarrassment of riches."

"That depends. If one were summoned to a feast of the gods and had no appetite for nectar and ambrosia, they would, I suspect, be rather insipid."

"But what right have you, Miss Marjorie, at your age, to go hunting for such a simile?"

"My age!" with a little weary, half pathetic accent on the monosyllable. "I feel as though I had lived aeons since I had that illness. I wonder if one may grow old in hours and days and nobody suspect?"

"Not without some very profound cause for it."

"I cannot tell what mine is," speaking very rapidly and earnestly. "I only know things are different with me. It seems as though life had changed, — gained different values, — had an altered perspective. I don't know precisely how to express it. You see, I had so much time to think in that long, slow convalescence."

He was beginning to get an inkling of the truth. He did not speak. It was those keen, sympathetic eyes which drew her on.

"I remember that day when they brought me the

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mirror for the first time, and I looked at my sharp face and shaven poll with a kind of languid curiosity as though they belonged to somebody else. But afterward I began to realize slowly how ill I had been. Then, in the long night-watches or the hushed days, when I could do nothing but lie and think in a slow, helpless sort of fashion, something would seem to stand at my bedside, and I knew it was Life — my own Life — come back, and looking at me with tender, solemn eyes, and saying to me, 'Here I am again, you see. What are you going to do with me, Marjorie Day?'

"I could not find any answer to that. It seemed as though I *must*. The question haunted me with a kind of solemn imperiousness. I thought I should know when I got well; but here I am to-day, no wiser, no nearer a reply, than I was when it was an effort to lift my hand to my head. Dr. Amoury, can't you help me?"

"I am not sure. We sometimes spoil things by being in too great a hurry. Your summer seems, at least, to have been taken out of your hands and perfectly arranged for you."

"I thought you, the only man in the world to whom I could say these things, would see, would understand," broke out Marjorie, in a tone of half-indignant reproach. "I am not sure this kind of arranged summer is just what I want. I know perfectly what Newport is, and Bar Harbor will be much the same,

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with a difference of surroundings of course. If I go to any of these places, I shall not be mistress of my own time, hardly of my own thoughts. I shall be obliged to give up more or less of the feeling and habit of independence which are part of my very life. How, in the nature of things, can it be otherwise? I shall have every care, attention, affection, lavished on me. I should be a monster of ingratitude if I did not have a vivid, compelling consciousness of all this. Of course I shall be in the swim. That means, at Newport, a life made up of drives and rides, of lunches, receptions, afternoon teas, of croquet and lawn-tennis, of dances and grand dinners, and all sorts of luxurious gayeties. It will be a graceful, splendid, pleasure-taking, absolutely useless life. Of course, I shall get to enjoying it immensely in a little while. It will gratify my love of picturesque, harmonious, elegant surroundings. I shall like to float on the current. There is one side of me which is a born sybarite. But there is another side, too, which will shame and reproach that weaker one. I shall grow inexpressibly tired of all this endless dressing, and ceremony, and display. It will seem to me, sometimes, unworthy of rational beings. How is one going to justify an existence of this sort to one's own soul! I shall shiver inwardly when I find myself laughing at inane jokes and affected witticisms, and looking as though I enjoyed what is secretly a horrible bore. I shall feel occasionally — I am sure of it — as

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though I belonged to others — soul and body. Then the feeling will lash my conscience, when I remember all that is being done for me. I believe I always was an ungrateful wretch. Doctor," with a little amused laugh, and a sudden change of tone which was one of Miss Day's attractions, "aren't you, by this time, sufficiently disgusted with this endless ringing of changes on the Ego?"

"My dear child, I am only disgusted by that last question. Go on, please."

"I don't know as there is anything more to say," speaking half to herself. "Oh, yes! There is another thing which is new in my experience, at least to a like degree. I have, of late, a kind of passion for doing all sorts of homely, every-day things. I know how a child feels whose fingers itch to be at something. Perhaps, since my illness, I have gone back to first principles. At any rate, the old likings and habits have lost their charm. Reading even has become a bore. It is horribly slow getting on with some favorite author. I just like to busy myself with simple tasks, such as arranging my rooms, dusting the furniture, kindling the fire in my grate. It seems as though there were something cheery and wholesome in all these things. My spirits grow light and gay in doing them. I feel as birds and fishes must in their native element. All this, perhaps, only goes to prove I am a very common-place person."

Here she glanced with a half-arch half-wistful

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expression at the hands which lay on her lap, and, lifting them with a playful grimace, said, "Doctor, they never earned a dollar in the world!"

The doctor glanced at them too. Their sculpture suggested ancestry, and their white, expressive slenderness made him wonder if they were not their own excuse for being. But he did not avow this: he only asked in a way which seemed to him rather unsympathetic and bungling, "Have you thought, my young friend, of anything you would like to do?"

"All the ways seem hedged up. Don't lift your brows in that fashion, Doctor! I know what opportunities I have had. I certainly ought to be equipped for some service in the world. I go over the list of my studies, — accomplishments, if you please, — and then ask myself what I can do. I know enough of art to be certain that anything I should attempt in that line, despite all my drawing and painting lessons, would be dreadfully amateur*ish*. Of course, I could paint plaques and decorate panels, and my friends would praise and buy them for my sake. But I should rob somebody else who could do better work. Then as to music, I listen to it and it sometimes pours a divine rapture through me. But when it comes to the born artist's touch or the singing throat, I have neither. I graduated at Smith College, but just now I have not the slightest desire for teaching in any form. Indeed, it is curious that I, who ought to

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inherit the tastes and habits of a scholar, recoil now from any mental effort. I might perfunctorily teach a street gamin the alphabet; but I would not, in my present mood, attempt parlor readings, papers on high art, or anything of the kind, unless it were to save my life."

This struck the doctor as a curious mental phenomenon, whose explanation lay in remote psychological and physiological causes. While he was reflecting on these, Marjorie said, with a good deal of hesitancy of air and manner, "There is only one thing which it seems to me just now I could attempt with the slightest prospect of success."

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"You will promise not to think it is all a fad, a whim, or worse than these — that the illness has hopelessly turned my brain? My friends would be sure to think that;" and she flashed a little half-amused, half-dubious glance at him.

His smile was absolutely reassuring. "I am prepared to testify to your perfect sanity."

"I should like to take charge of somebody who was ill, who needed sympathetic care and watchful nursing. I think I should know what to do. Papa used to say, in his last illness, nobody's touch was so soft and deft as his Marjorie's." Her lips quivered. "Of course his fondness may have made him partial. But I have been ill myself since that time. I know how one feels, — what one wants."

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"But, Marjorie," said the doctor, "have you counted with your host? Do you realize, should you attempt this thing, what a burden you would lift on slight, unused shoulders? Your past is behind you. Its life, its habits, must have become second nature to you. I should be less your friend if I did not set these stern facts before you. You must not look at them through rosy atmospheres. Think what it is to be at the beck and call of others, to devote your time, your thoughts, your life, to the requirements of such a service!"

"I have tried to look all that in the face," and the note of doubt and sadness which crept into her voice touched him. "I may find the task too hard for me. But all the same I have an instinct, deep as my own soul, that I have come to the parting of the ways — that my future depends much upon the choice I make now. It is not," she went on more rapidly, "that I am looking for a career, or feel called to any life-mission. I have no ambitions in any particular line — no thought of helping others in any large way. That may come later; but just now about all I can do is to help myself. I have not the slightest impulse to enter a hospital or go into training for a nurse. I can't imagine anything of that sort as my life-work. But what I could do now might give me courage, help me to some larger place, when the time or the duty called. I must be very incoherent. It is all so vague to me!"

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The doctor sat silent, looking at the young woman with serious eyes. In all his acquaintance with femininity such a problem as this had never been presented to him.

"Doctor," Marjorie broke out suddenly, answering his look, "I am asking you what to do with the life you gave back to me! If you do not help me at this crisis, there is no help anywhere. If I once go to Newport and launch myself on the social current, it will all be over with me. I cannot stem that tide. In that atmosphere I shall reflect the thoughts and feelings of my world. Its aims and ambitions will become all powerful with me. The chains will not be the less strong because they are light and invisible. There is no telling to what levels I may sink if the feeling of dependence should, in time, become insupportable. I may — other women better than I — have made loveless, mercenary marriages! Now everything is swept away, I am sure that most of my friends would regard an ambitious match as the one happy solution of all my difficulties. What if I should come, in time, to agree with them!"

She looked at him with pained, wistful eyes. A little shudder crept over her.

Dr. Amoury rose without saying a word, and walked across the long room. It was his habit when anything puzzled or baffled him. While Marjorie Day had been talking, a picture which he had seen years ago in the Louvre had come back to

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him. It was "the interior of a convent kitchen, where beautiful, white-winged angels were doing the homeliest work amid pots and pans, and missing no particle of charm or grace amid all the coarse surroundings."

After a while the doctor returned to the young woman. "Marjorie," he said, unconsciously addressing her in the familiar way which had been his habit during her illness, because he observed it quieted her in her wildest moments, as though she caught the echo of another voice, and now his own was full of tender solemnity, "I am getting to be an old man. Perhaps I am older now than your father was when he left you. What would he have said had he listened this morning in my place?"

For the first time tears dimmed the beautiful eyes. "If he knew all," she said softly, "I do not believe he would try to dissuade me."

"Then I will not. All you have said this morning was very brave, very noble, was worthy of your father's daughter. I shall be glad to serve you to the uttermost. But I can promise nothing now. You must give me a few days to think."

Less than half an hour later Dr. Amoury and Marjorie Day stood together on the veranda of the summer boarding-house at Briarsley. They looked together over the wide landscape, beautiful with the fresh, manifold beauty of the early Northland June. Field and meadow and orchard were all a-riot with

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blossoms. The warm air was full of sweet scents, of flashing insects, of singing birds. Small brooks glinted here and there like silver cords twisted among the green of meadows and pasture slopes. The distant hills stood in picturesque relief against a sky of June's perfect sapphire. And this radiant day had been wrought out of all the year's dark and cold and storms!

Did the doctor, standing there, think of this? Did Marjorie?

She turned to him now. Her eyes shone like some piece of rich-veined onyx. "How beautiful June is!" she exclaimed. "It is my birth-month too. In a little while I shall have lived twenty-six Junes!"

Was it those tendrils of soft brown hair which gave her face its youthful look? he wondered.

But before he could speak she had drawn closer to him.

"I am not afraid of the future! I thank you, Dr. Amoury, for bringing me back to life that night," said Marjorie Day.

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II

BITS. — BIOGRAPHICAL, ETC.

TEN minutes later Dr. Amoury was saying to himself as he bowled along the pleasant up-hill roads, —

"She is a splendid creature! Such a woman is like a breath from the heaven she came from to a weary man's soul. She serves to show him by contrast what a bungling, thick-cuticled animal he is at best. That other woman — God help me! — was like her, who kissed me for the last time ten years ago this month, and carried my heart with her into the silence."

His admiration and sympathy had been deeply stirred. But Dr. Amoury was too sensible a man to underrate the difficulties of the problem which Marjorie Day had set before him. He saw at once that it would be no easy matter to give her any practical aid at this juncture.

"It is a noble enthusiasm. I am not going to chill it!" he exclaimed to himself as he flicked off a bee which had settled on the shoulder of his big sorrel mare. But in his secret soul he wished her ardor had taken some different form. That was

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Marjorie's own affair, he reflected. Women brought up as she had been sometimes experienced a rebound from all their old tastes and aptitudes. Any reaction in her case would be in the line of her temperament, sound and wholesome to the core. This much at least was evident. She had reached a crisis in her life. What would be the outcome of it only time would prove.

But one thing Dr. Amoury told himself very positively, unconsciously giving a pull at the reins which started off the sorrel at a smart trot, "he was not going to send that delicate, tenderly reared creature into a coarse, uncongenial atmosphere. How few people would understand her or her motives!

"Matrimony would settle the affair in short order."

He could have cursed himself the next moment for such a thought, feeling what sacrilege a merely brilliant marriage would be for such a woman. "Here we are nearing the close of our boasted nineteenth century, and we have managed to make a pretty mess of it for the best of our womankind!" was the upshot of the doctor's reflections.

Had Dr. Amoury been challenged to relate all the facts which he knew of Marjorie Day's history, they would not have formed a long chapter. He had learned she was an only child, motherless before her third birthday. She had been her father's solace, companion, idol. They lived in one of those beautiful Massachusetts towns which retain much of the

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quiet and charm of the country, while their proximity to Boston insures their reflecting, in more or less degree, the life and character of the metropolis.

Stephen Day had been a tolerably successful broker on State Street. He might have been more so, if, sitting in his office, his real tastes and affiliations had not been with his library, twelve miles away at Sea Knolls. After his graduation, he had left Harvard with little to depend upon except his own energies. Circumstances had opened a business career to him, and he was forced to remain in this by a marriage which had made the supreme happiness of his life.

It was his delight to gather under his hospitable roof convives of kindred temper and tastes — the classmates and friends of his youth. Here were assembled many persons famous in the literary and artistic world, as well as leaders in science. The host was delightful at his own board. He was abreast with all the best thoughts of the time; and his criticism of poets, authors, statesmen, philanthropists, though it was tinged with the man's native optimism, was very stimulating and incisive. His humor had a quaint, genial quality, which suggested Charles Lamb's.

Many of his guests went away from a delightful evening at Sea Knolls, declaring "it was a confounded shame that a man like Stephen Day should busy himself in the Stock Exchange."

After Marjorie's school-days were over, she and her

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father went abroad and remained for more than two years, travelling leisurely through England and on the continent. This had been the cherished dream of both, from her early girlhood.

Stephen Day returned suddenly with his daughter, on hearing that business interests had suffered in his absence. People with whom he had trusted the bulk of his fortunes proved dishonest or incapable. In the midst of harassments he suddenly sickened. His illness proved fatal before he could adjust his affairs.

When these were at last settled, nothing was left to the daughter of what had been a comfortable fortune. One investment after another had dwindled before the owner's death, or proved worthless afterward. It seemed as though some hostile fate had presided over the settlement of Stephen Day's estate. It was well that his daughter had not been trained to set a supreme value on wealth. Stunned by the great loss of her life, it was some time before she could comprehend the real state of affairs.

The loss of Sea Knolls was a grief only less than that of her father. The twin monosyllables formed the name which her mother had given to the new home when her young husband brought her to it the year after their marriage. There was a charming fitness, too, in this quaint name. The surface of the grounds, which included several acres, was a good deal broken by slight swells and dips of the land. At

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one point a couple of knolls, not far from each other, crowned by a small growth of cedars, commanded, in clear atmospheres, a gray, glimmering line, which marked the sea fifteen miles away.

On the highest point of Sea Knolls stood the house, solid and ample, a piece of finely preserved architecture, a good deal in the Colonial style. The front grounds were ornamented by shrubberies and hedges. At the back was a deep, delightful old garden where foot-paths wandered among fruit-trees, flowering bushes, and beds of bloom. Everybody who came to Sea Knolls was charmed with its wide rather low-ceiled, restful rooms, its lovely grounds and garden, and more than all else, with its atmosphere of refined simplicity.

Sea Knolls had been Marjorie's birth place. It was bound up with the happiest associations, the dearest memories, of her life. It was impossible to conceive of an existence away from that roof. The last blow stunned her for a while. Friends — her own and her father's — rallied around her. Homes were pressed upon her acceptance before the time came for leaving her own. Friendship tried every device for solacing and cheering the young woman. In a little while she found that the life which she thought had been left behind her at Sea Knolls was still quick and warm in her pulses. Youth called to her on every side, and it was impossible for a nature so vital and glowing not to respond.

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Less than a year after her father's death Marjorie Day came to Briarsley. This was a quiet hamlet in North-eastern Massachusetts, with fields, meadows, and pasture stretches sloping off to the coast line, several miles away. Briarsley had a growing reputation for its bracing air, its pleasant scenery, and its quiet boarding-places.

Marjorie had enjoyed herself in the little hamlet, which looked off from rugged, picturesque slopes to the ocean line. One and another of her friends had fluttered down from gayer summer resorts to join her for a few days. She had been here two months when the typhoid-fever seized her, and barely escaped settling all the disturbing problems of her life.

When she had sufficiently recovered, she returned to Boston. But the long hours of convalescence, the questioning with her own soul, had had their effect. Wealth and friendship surrounded her with the graces and luxuries of life, and it seemed to her a poor return that she should be inwardly unsatisfied and restless. She was haunted by a secret discontent with her aimless, self-indulgent days. She longed for some purpose that would give meaning and dignity to her existence. It was broken up now in graceful idling, in bright, gossipy talk, in all kinds of pleasant, wasteful details. These things appeared to her at times hopelessly vapid and wearisome. Then she would wonder if the fault did not lie at

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her own door, — if she had not lost the spring of her own elasticity and enjoyment.

Marjorie shrank, too, from the chorus of disapproval she foresaw, if she avowed any desire to try a more independent life. The sale of her father's library, with some choice pictures and heirlooms, had thus far saved her from any sense of dependence. But this would be sure to come in time, and chafe her.

Friends — young and old, men and women — in whom she could trust, and whose advice in ordinary emergencies would be sympathetic and wise, came up to her now, only to be dismissed after long reflection. Not sure of herself, not clear as to her own aims and wishes, how could she expect others' to be for her?

Whenever she thought of Briarsley, — of the wide, quiet horizons, the delicious pine scents of the woods, the fair, restful landscape, — she thought, too, of Dr. Amoury. He had always brought a fresh, invigorating atmosphere into her sick-chamber. She had been all her life accustomed to the society of polished and agreeable men; but the country-side doctor seemed to her the finest man, except her father, whom she had ever known. In the tumult of her thoughts and feelings, her memory would go back to the kind, masterful face which had bent over her bedside so often while she was slowly climbing back from death to life.

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"If I could only see him, he would understand, he would sympathize," she said to herself as she paced her chamber, while the days grew long, and outside the May was budding and the trees were bursting into leaf in the parks and gardens and quiet nooks of the long winter-bound, east-wind-scourged Northland city.

Marjorie had not entered society when she returned to Boston, although she had occasionally joined some informal company at the houses of her friends. Meanwhile a programme of great social gayety during the Newport season was being devised for her. The most fashionable of her friends thought they were doing the wisest best possible thing for her at this juncture. She could not be indifferent to these proofs of interest and affection. Her assent to all the plans had been simply taken for granted. What an ungrateful return it would be to tear herself away at the last moment! The summer's prospect was, moreover, very seductive on one side. She had the delight of youth and a finely organized nature in the graces and luxuries, in the color and movement, of a varied and sensuous life. "How far could she rely on herself?" she wondered, doubtful and despondent in some moods. "If the air for which she felt at times such wistful longings was simpler and purer, had her soul a wing to hold itself in that wider, finer ether? Would she not long for the gilded cage, the perfumed atmospheres, the luxurious leisures? Was

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she equal to the strain of some novel task amid new relations and circumstances? If she attempted anything of the sort and failed, what a ridiculous and pitiful outcome it would be!"

She winced at the thought of amused smiles in kindly eyes which would greet her return. Of course her friends would forgive her on the ground that there was no accounting for the whims and fads of a young woman sensible enough in the main!

In some moods Marjorie's thoughts and questionings ran in this jangled way. In some moods, a life with tasks, denials, responsibilities, differing totally from all to which she had been accustomed, seemed impossible to her.

But Marjorie Day was a young woman with aspirations and ideals, and other moods came, and these were solemn and imperious.

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III

SOME CHARMING WOMEN'S CHATTER

EARLY in June a small lunch-party was assembled in an elegant dining-room on Commonwealth Avenue. The party was composed solely of femininity about to make the annual flight to various summer resorts on the New England coast. The table was resplendent with rare porcelain and silver, and heaped with flowers and fruits. The ladies were, for the most part, young, and all were in elegant toilets. There were lovely faces among the company. All had the charm of refined and gracious manners. The room was full of gay talk, accented by those soft peals of laughter which make one's heart light to hear. Amid some bright persiflage and gossip about the opening Newport season, Marjorie Day's name came up. Some of the guests belonged to the circle of her friends. Her sudden decision to go to Briarsley for a month was received with a crescendo of surprise followed by varieties of criticism and disapproving comment.

"What can possess her to give up Newport for that out-of-the-way, bovine old hamlet! What soli-

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tary thing can she find to interest her there! One would imagine she must die of *ennui* in a week!"

The speaker, near the head of the table, was a handsome, rather haughty-looking girl.

"And it is such a disappointment to all her friends!" chimed in another of the young voices. "I met Blanche Elliott down town yesterday, — you know her father and Marjorie's were almost like brothers, and the girls were at Smith College, and so fond of each other. Blanche confided to me it was like the going-off of a bomb-shell in the family — they had counted so confidently on Marjorie's going with them. They expected she would join the yacht-regatta which is to come off at Marblehead, and she would have been such an acquisition to the party; but lo! to everybody's dismay, she would go and bury herself in the most dead-and-alive corner of the planet!"

"But," subjoined another lady, with a sweet face and bright violet eyes, who sat in the dignity of three-months' wifehood among her virgin companions, "Marjorie is such a clever creature we may be sure she knows what she is about. There must be some good reason for her going to Briarsley. She will find something to interest her anywhere, though to ordinary humanity the place might be a deadly bore."

"Then I'm devoutly thankful — if it must come to a choice between Newport and old Briarsley — that

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the gods set me in the ranks of ordinary humanity. Blessed be averages!"

The speech came from a rosy-lipped, sparkling brunette, and was followed by a chorus of light laughter about the table.

It is surprising what shallow talk will pass for wit when it is accented by a pretty woman's smiles and glances.

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IV

A LETTER THAT PROVED HER FATE

One night, less than a week after the interview with Marjorie Day, Dr. Amoury found, on his return home, a letter awaiting him from a former patient. It was some time since he had seen the elegant, rather peculiar hand. The writer declared herself in a domestic emergency. She had dismissed her attendant the day before, and wished her successor to be, if possible, a young woman of some intelligence and refinement. The lady expressed, in fervid tones, her immeasurable weariness and disgust with the average service in a sick-room. She desired the attendance of a person who would not rasp her nerves nor make her flesh recoil, — some one, in short, with a measure of the instincts and habits of a lady. The requirements would not be exacting. They would admit much freedom to the right sort of person, and large spaces each day of entire leisure from service. The salary, if other things were satisfactory, would be most liberal. In conclusion, the writer stated that the doctor had occurred to her in her extremity as one most likely to understand her wishes, and possibly know of some

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person who would, at least to a degree, satisfy them.

In all this there was a certain strain of morbidness or egoism, which a person of fine perceptions would be sure to detect.

Dr. Amoury sat for a long time in thought, absently twirling the dainty envelope in his hand. At last, with that little, decisive gesture characteristic of him when he had made up his mind, he turned to the table and wrote a letter to Marjorie Day, enclosing the one from his correspondent.

A few terse, incisive sentences gave a general idea of the lady's character. These would, no doubt, have astonished, and, in some respects, not have flattered her. There was some detail of her personal history and habits.

"I have not met her for five years," the doctor continued, "and am rather surprised at her applying to me in this small domestic cataclasm. There is a chance of larger surprises should you or I have any closer relations with her. One learns to be wary about counting too absolutely on human nature. Mrs. Cameron might exhibit better or worse aspects than those I have tried to show you; but I am certain you would find the qualities I have mentioned.

"My dear child, it just comes to this: I can't advise you. I send Mrs. Angus Cameron's letter to speak for itself to your instincts. If these incline you to pursue the matter, I will confer with her at once.

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One thing, however, I must insist on at the outset, as I shall be careful for your interests as though you were my own daughter: I must, if it comes to an arrangement between you two, have full liberty to adjust all the details. I will not see you, at least with my consent, going blindfold into an affair of this sort."

Two days later Marjorie's reply arrived.

"I have slept on Mrs. Cameron's letter. I have a feeling that she is to be my fate. We might try each other for a month. I leave all details absolutely in your hands."

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V

AFTER THE DECISION

MRS. ABIGAIL AINSLEE came into Miss Day's room late one afternoon. There was a little excited air about her as she took a seat in front of her guest. The elder woman had just come from an interview with Dr. Amoury, which had followed his longer one with Marjorie. Mrs. Ainslee was the mistress of the large private boarding-house where Marjorie was staying. The first impression which the hostess made was that of an inborn motherliness. You felt this in the tones of her voice and the clasp of her soft, plump hand. She was a short, rather rotund woman, with a bright, ruddy-complexioned face, which must have been pretty in its youth, and would be attractive in its old age because of the warm heart which shone out of the merry eyes and beamed in the kindly smile.

Mrs. Ainslee was a widow and childless. She possessed all the domestic gifts of the notable New England housekeeper. She excelled in all the arts and devices of appetizing cookery. The quiet boarding-house had an indefinable, home-like atmos-

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phere to which people returned summer after summer. Mrs. Ainslee had a mother-wit and a quaint humor which made her talk very amusing. She was a shrewd reader of character, and her judgments of people were pretty sure to go straight as an arrow to the mark.

It was this woman who now sat gazing at Marjorie Day with a solicitude in her eyes which was like a mother's.

"Well, Mrs. Ainslee," said Marjorie, leaning forward after a minute's silence, and her tone had a suspicion of forced gayety, "you have seen the doctor?"

"Yes, Miss Marjorie."

"And he has told you — everything?"

"Only a part, I think; although he said you had left it with him to say whatever he thought best."

"But you know, at least, that I am going away from you for a little while to stay with one of his patients, a lady who is more or less of an invalid. Of course you know also that this is an entirely new experiment on my part, one, too, which would meet with the utmost opposition from my friends?"

"All that the doctor told me."

The voices of the two women had grown serious by this time.

Marjorie laid her hand on Mrs. Ainslee's. "The doctor must have told you, too, that I should need your help in this matter."

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"Yes; he said there was no other woman who could serve you at this crisis as well as I, no other one, indeed, in whom it would be safe to confide;" and now another warm, little, plump hand, made for all service and helpfulness, was laid on Marjorie's slender one.

"No," said the girl softly, as one does when a sob lies perilously near the words; "I have no one to help me but you and the doctor."

"It has taken me by a great surprise," replied the elder woman, speaking half to herself. "I can't deny that, if you had laid the matter before me at first, I should have been dead set against it all. 'She little knows what she is undertaking,' I should have thought. 'It will prove a task beyond her strength.' But Dr. Amoury is wiser than I, — he is the best, wisest man I know in the world, — and he has given his consent, and I have promised him that I would help you, Miss Marjorie, in all ways that I can."

"Dear Mrs. Ainslee, how good you are! How your promise cheers me!"

From this point the talk branched off into various practical details. What struck Mrs. Ainslee most forcibly at this time, as it had the doctor, was the simple common-sense with which Marjorie regarded the step she was about to take. If the enthusiasm of her youth and temperament underlay all other feelings, she had it well in hand. It was certain she

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was not going to let her imagination play her false at this time.

"I cannot tell," she said; "I may have overrated my own strength or capacity. Indeed, it is myself of whom I am most afraid. That has all along been the secret of my shrinking from the encounter with my friends, should they get an inkling of my plan. I want bracing just now. They would weaken and unnerve me. I can gauge my own forces a little better, perhaps, than another. I must have one month to myself, — one month free from all that would distract me. I must face my task alone. Not a letter must be forwarded to me. It would distract my thoughts — draw me back too powerfully to the old associations and habits. If I am not equal to the task, I shall return to you at once, confess my failure, and rejoin my friends at Newport, a little sadder and wiser, as one must always be after a failure. Still, I don't think I shall regret the attempt in any case. One has to prove one's mettle, or one's lack of it, sooner or later."

Afterward Marjorie went on to speak of the perfectness with which the doctor had arranged each detail. She had not seen his letters to Mrs. Cameron, but he had informed her that the lady had evidently, with some reluctance, agreed to all his conditions. Indeed, there was no choice left her. It was to be perfectly understood that Mrs. Cameron or Miss Day should be at liberty to terminate their arrangement at any moment.

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Dr. Amoury had also taken upon himself all the responsibility of Miss Day's movement. He saw as clearly as she did the absolute necessity of her keeping her experiment a secret from her friends. In case they became importunate, he was prepared to arm himself with a physician's authority, and decline to reveal the place where he had thought it wise for her to remain for a short time.

All her letters, meanwhile, were to pass through his hands. Even Mrs. Ainslee should be spared embarrassment by not knowing her address.

Again Marjorie branched off into personal details. "I shall leave all my Newport wardrobe here, duly packed for starting, should I suddenly return. You see, I shall take with me only my plainest dresses, — grays for the most part, with some white ones for the warmest days."

"It won't make any difference what you wear, my dear," silently commented Mrs. Ainslee. "You'll carry a ladyhood with you that can't be affected by your gowns."

"He seems to have thought of everything," Marjorie concluded, a little later, a glowing recital of Dr. Amoury's services in her behalf. "No other man could have done so much, with such generous thoughtfulness and delicacy."

"You may well say that, Miss Marjorie," replied her hostess; "I have known that man for more than thirty years. I have seen him in such grief and such

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gladness as come to the lives of few men. I think the trouble and the happiness have both helped to make him what he is to-day."

Marjorie did not stop to analyze the association between these words and her next question.

"You knew his wife, I believe?"

"I knew his wives, Miss Marjorie."

"Had he two?" the tone one of startled surprise.

"I supposed you knew that."

"A few times only he has spoken to me of one."

The question in Marjorie's eyes did not pass her lips.

Mrs. Ainslee replied to the look: "It is thirty years ago. I was often with the first wife during her last illness. It was before my marriage and the Amouries were our neighbors. Nobody else knew, nobody else heard. It has never passed my lips."

Marjorie gathered from Mrs. Ainslee's reticence, as well as from a few sentences which she added, evidently half under protest, that the doctor's first marriage had not been a happy one; that it had been preceded by an earlier attachment which had ended in a most painful misunderstanding and separation; his marriage occurred soon afterward. His wife was a young, handsome, proud woman, with elegant manners, and a bright, chilly smile; they lived together half a dozen years, and then the illness seized her from which she never recovered. In her last hours — partly in the delirium of fever, partly in moments of remorse — she confessed the share she

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had had in separating her husband from his young love. The trouble had arisen in a feeling on her part of piqued vanity. This grew gradually into a passion of jealousy, a consuming desire for revenge, and triumph at all costs. The end was a skilfully planned intrigue — a cruel wrong."

Mrs. Ainslee, absorbed in the drama, was recalled by the horrified look in her listener's eyes.

"My dear," she said with a sudden change of tone, "perhaps I have done wrong to tell you this. Was it something in your eyes that drew it out of me? It makes me shiver now, after all these years, as I recall it. I see the doctor pacing the room with set lips and the hunted look in his eyes, and his face will be no whiter when it lies in his coffin. I hear his voice as he said, —

"'I could forgive you, Helen, for all my share of the wretchedness — but there was Hope. What must it have been to her!'

"Yet he was very pitiful at the last. He forgave her too, with such tender words as she would want to take away into the stillness — take away to the love and pity of God.

"Two years later he did what she had begged him — brought the other woman home, his wife. She was not so proud a beauty as the dead one; but oh, my dear, she had the loveliest face! her eyes seemed half of it. And when she smiled, it was as though her soul shone right into them. They were very

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happy together; I am sure that neither ever spoke one unkindly word of that dead woman. The doctor has never been just the same man since Hope Amoury left him; but he has kept the pain shut close in his heart, and held bravely to his work for these ten widowed years."

There were tears in the eyes of both women.

"One thing is certain — the doctor hasn't forgotten how to laugh in a hearty, mellow fashion that is downright catchin'," resumed Mrs. Ainslee, whose vernacular would occasionally have grated on critical ears. "I used to say to Isaac, — he was my brother-in-law, — as kind a fellow as ever trod ground, but as solemn as an owl, most times, 'You've got to have your laugh out honest, and big, and hearty some time, Isaac, but I begin to think nobody is goin' to have the pleasure of hearing it this side o' Jordan."

A smile twinkled about Marjorie's lips as she inquired: "What did Isaac say to that?"

"'It ain't just reverent to talk of heaven in that free fashion, Abigail Ainslee. If we get there, we shall find somethin' better than laughin' goin' on, I'm thinkin'.'

"'Don't tell me that again, Isaac.' I turned right on him then. 'I remember my little Ben that died, — my baby, sent to me of God, — and how he used to lie in his cradle a-croonin' and a-gigglin' all to himself, and I'd stop my work and hold my breath and listen, and wonder what he was a-hearin' and a-seein'.

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"And when my baby went away from me and there was such a dreadful stillness where the little feet had gone patterin' all day, and my heart was ready to break for rememberin' and hungerin' for the old sounds, I'd try to think of my boy toddlin' about among the flowers, where no frost was ever known to creep. Am I goin' to believe my little Ben isn't as happy off there as he was down here, purlin' and croonin' in his cradle under his mother's eyes? No laughin' in heaven! Never tell that to a mother who has laid her baby under the grass.'"

There was other talk between the two women as the sunshine of the late June afternoon stole into the wide, cool chamber where they sat together. Everything was settled now. Dr. Amoury was to write Mrs. Cameron on his return that Miss Day would be with her in forty-eight hours.

Mrs. Ainslee's mother-heart kept its yearning to itself as she gazed at the young, beautiful woman, who was going so soon to a new life and unfamiliar tasks, among people whom she had never seen.

But Marjorie fronted her fortune bravely.

"To compare small things with great," she said, "I think I understand how Columbus felt just before he set out from that old harbor of Palos; only he came back one day from a new world with colors flying, while I may steal in, before the week is out, an ignominious failure, in my first match with the world."

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VI

A LEAP INTO TERRA INCOGNITA

THE village of Old Lanes lay, a wide, shallow basin, between low, rounded hills about fifty miles from the coast and a dozen below the southern boundary-line of New Hampshire. It had enjoyed an era of great manufacturing prosperity, from which high estate it had fallen into the sleepiest of agricultural sections. Its landscape had a picturesque variety of pasture slopes, thriving orchards, rich fields and meadows. Moose River flowed at the bottom of the wide, green basin, and, seen from the surrounding hills and in certain lights, glittered golden-brown against the gray rocks and green banks.

The air of Old Lanes had once been full of the bustle and varied activity which were the necessary corollary of its immense iron works. Operatives in large numbers had been imported into the town. This period formed the Golden Age of Old Lanes. One man, a native of the town, a born business genius, had been the inspiring brain of all this industry.

Angus Cameron was the son of a Scotchman, a

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full-blooded descendant of the old Highland clan, who had in his youth emigrated to America. He had settled at Old Lanes, and his native thriftiness had flourished in the foreign air. In a few years he was the richest man in the town. More than half a century ago and in that locäle this did not imply a great fortune; but it afforded Angus, the only son, a college training and a year's travel abroad. Soon after his return the elder Cameron died, and the son inherited his father's fortune.

He established the great Iron Works in Old Lanes. He threw himself, heart and soul, into the business, and under his skilful management the paternal thousands gradually expanded into millions. The great capitalist, the successful head of the many-chimnied, tall-storied factories, on which depended the well-being of thousands, became, of course, the magnate of his native town. He was rather the better type of the business man. He had a boundless faith in himself, and that arrogance which is apt to accompany it. But he often exhibited generous traits, and was liked by his employés.

The old homestead had stood on a sightly slope which the first owner, who cherished the names and associations of his youth, had christened Cameron Brae. On this site the son had raised a large and handsome edifice, in the latest architectural style of the time; and an English landscape gardener had spent his best skill on the grounds.

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The owner was a good deal past middle age when he brought a young and beautiful bride to Cameron Brae. The social life of the great house at Old Lanes was, henceforth, conducted on a grand scale. The guests were always coming and going, and the gay parties were the talk and wonder of the neighborhood. The young mistress, with her beauty, grace, and spirits, was the crowning attraction of all these festivities, in doors and out, for there were frequent garden-parties and picnics to the woods and various charming nooks in the vicinity.

Everybody said Angus Cameron was a man to be greatly envied. He certainly was, if material success and the achievement of all one's worldly ambitions constitute a man's happiness. He enjoyed all the sensible evidences of his success, — the elegant home, the beautiful grounds, the handsome stables, the high-blooded horses. He was fond, too, of his young wife, and idolized the beautiful children — a boy and girl — which she brought him.

But the owner of Cameron Brae still regarded himself, as all the world did, in the prime of his life, when he sickened and died suddenly. In less than two years the children had followed him. The business, of which he had been the founder, felt the loss of the master-mind in every department. In a few years a wide financial depression followed. The Iron Works languished, and were at last sold at a great sacrifice. The factories were soon afterward burned

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to the ground. The population, which had aggregated about them, gradually dwindled and dispersed to more available labor-markets. Old Lanes returned to its primitive pastoral quiet.

Mrs. Cameron buried herself, after these griefs, in seclusion and in an atmosphere of chronic invalidism amid the scenes of her former triumphs. Though her fortunes had greatly diminished, they were still ample. Her husband had been dead for nearly twenty years, and she was now deep in her fifties.

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VII

A MONTH AT CAMERON BRAE

MARJORIE DAY had been a month at Old Lanes. It seemed years to her when she looked back to that hour, when she arrived in the early dusk at the station, three miles away. A carriage was awaiting her, and she had been driven to Cameron Brae. The first impression which it made on her was that of an English country house, stately and ample, in the midst of handsome grounds. Once across the threshold, she had followed somebody, — it was impossible to remember whom, — to her own apartments. These consisted of two rooms, and all the furnishings, though not in the newest fashion, were delightfully complete and tasteful. It was evident there was room and to spare now at Cameron Brae. When she was alone, Marjorie went to one of the windows and sat down. She needed the familiar sight of the sky and earth to steady her. The window opened on a wide, diversified landscape. Marjorie took it all in — the distant masses of darkening woodland, the scattered homesteads amid the corn and wheat fields, the wide, brown highway, and the lanes, some of

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them hardly more than a faint thread-like line, and others making broad, green gashes among the pastures, meadows, and orchards. Whoever had given Old Lanes its delightful and most fitting name must have been an artist at heart, though he had never handled pencil or brush.

At last Marjorie's gaze went to the summits of the low hills which framed all this quiet pastoral picture. The restfulness of the scene entered into her soul. She gathered up all the forces of her will. It was hardly four hours since Mrs. Ainslee had taken leave of her with that motherly kiss at the tiny Briarsley station. Yet how long ago it seemed, and how perfectly she had put her past behind her!

She had said to Dr. Amoury at their last meeting, —

"A voice, a message even, from my old world might upset everything at the beginning. Don't write me, please, for a month."

After a while — it might have been minutes, it might have been hours — a maid knocked at her door. She brought an invitation to dinner, and a message that Mrs. Cameron would be ready to see her afterwards.

Half an hour later Marjorie stood by the lady's couch. The two women looked curiously at each other. What Marjorie saw lying under the laces of the canopy was a colorless face with a striking purity of outline, framed in masses of shining gray hair, which gave it an air of distinction. She saw at a

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glance that Mrs. Cameron must have been a beauty in her day. Indeed, she might still be called one. The dark eyes had not lost their brilliance, though they had a wearied, unsatisfied expression, and there was a hint of petulance about the mouth, which had almost forgotten its old trick of smiling.

The woman, lying there amid her solitude and luxury, passionately nursing the memories of her griefs until they had made her self-centred and morbid, might not have given the impression of one swift to do a kindly action; but you would have felt she would never be guilty of an ungraceful one. Even in her youth those high features, all their rare perfection of line still unbroken under the shining hair, must have had a certain haughtiness which years had accented. It is sufficient to say that everything about her was in keeping, — the elegance, the soft lights, the delicate, harmonious colors.

Mrs. Cameron's long invalidism had been of that subtle kind with which the mental constitution and *morale* have perhaps as close a connection as the physique. At all events, her ailment had persistently baffled her physicians, who had a secret conviction that the real difficulty in the way of Mrs. Cameron's recovery was a temperamental one.

In her turn the lady regarded Marjorie with more interest than she often allowed herself to feel in anything of late years. This, no doubt, had its source, partly, in interested motives. She had grown, like

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most chronic invalids, sensitive to personal atmospheres; and Marjorie's services would involve frequent presence and close attendance. These, in a coarse, ill-bred person, were intolerable to Mrs. Cameron. Tones and manners easily irritated her tastes and nerves — a natural result of her self-centred life.

Dr. Amoury had, in his brief attendance on Mrs. Cameron, when circumstances brought him for a short time into the vicinity of Old Lanes, made a very favorable impression.

His report of Miss Day, his evident regard for her, his insistence on various provisions for her comfort and independence before he would consent to her entering Mrs. Cameron's service — all had their effect. To some of these stipulations she had perfunctorily submitted.

"Does he really imagine I want a second Queen Zenobia for my waiting-maid?" she had asked herself dubiously as she tossed down his second letter.

Yet she had at last brought herself to agree to the doctor's ultimatum.

"I am Miss Day," said the soft contralto voice at the bedside, and it was an agreeable surprise to the hearer.

Mrs. Cameron's glance took in the slender figure in its gray dress, and the large, dark eyes gazing earnestly into hers.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Day," she said, that old instinct of ladyhood uppermost with which she

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had often greeted a guest in her elegant drawing-room. "I hope — they have made you comfortable."

"Perfectly, thank you. I ought perhaps to tell you, Mrs. Cameron, that while I desire to be of some real service to you, I may not succeed at first; but I shall be glad to learn. Can I begin at once — to-night?"

This speech was unlike anything to which Mrs. Cameron had been accustomed in her former attendants. The simple directness was an attractive surprise to her.

"Not to-night, thank you;" the slight haughtiness which was her habit when she addressed her inferiors, a good deal in abeyance. "Will you sit down, Miss Day? It may be best to talk over matters now so that we can — understand each other."

Half an hour's talk followed. Marjorie learned what services would be expected of her, and at what hours. Her attendance on Mrs. Cameron was to be limited to the mornings and certain hours of the early evenings. The afternoons would be entirely at Miss Day's disposal. Dr. Amoury had made this stipulation, as he wished her to have leisure for the out-door walks on which he had insisted.

This arrangement accorded with Mrs. Cameron's wishes. She was always brightest after midday, and devoted a large part of the afternoons to letter-writing — the chief mental occupation she allowed herself.

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Marjorie was to breakfast alone — to lunch and dine with Mrs. Cameron. These details, with minor ones, occupied the half-hour. Marjorie found that her duties would be lighter, her leisures longer, than she anticipated. She went back to her room with a feeling that she had crossed the Rubicon.

When Mrs. Cameron was alone, she laid her head back among the soft pillows, and said to herself, "That first interview was a fine test of quality. How intent she was on getting a clear idea of her service — none of those airs and assumptions of the ordinary wage-earner who has taken on a thin varnish of fine manners and feels above her place. Dr. Amoury was right. She is a new species of the genus."

This was the beginning of Marjorie Day's life at Old Lanes. She had been there a month, now, and as completely separated from her past as though she had gone on a visit to Jupiter. Dr. Amoury and Mrs. Ainslee had kept their word. Not a syllable from her own world had reached Marjorie.

Mrs. Cameron lived in the seclusion which had become, by this time, almost second nature. In her palmy days she had occasionally allowed herself to regret that she had not lived in Paris in the eighteenth century. Her true social orbit, she fancied, would have been among the leaders of those brilliant salons where women reigned among the gay decades which preceded the French Revolution.

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She rarely invited a guest to Cameron Brae. This was partly owing to a fact she never acknowledged to herself. She shrank from having her former friends gaze on the changes which time had wrought in her beauty. But it was easy to disguise this reluctance from her own consciousness, and believe that she was unequal to the duties of hostess.

Perhaps by this time Mrs. Cameron was past really caring for any human being. She had never been a large-natured woman. Only a few people — those who had stood in closest relations to her — ever held a place in her heart. When her husband died, it had not made her pitiful for the griefs of other widows; when the voices of her own children were silent, she never thought that the world was full of fatherless, motherless children, whose lives might have been brightened by her care, her love, her wealth. She had a morbid dread of anything which was painful or disagreeable. She shrank from hearing any tale of trouble or suffering. Yet it is only fair to say she was ready to pay amply for any service, and desired those about her should be comfortable. Her brighter moods, especially her letters, still gave proofs of that brilliant cleverness which had been the admiration of her large circle.

Marjorie's predecessors had thought Mrs. Cameron an exacting mistress. She did not strike her new attendant in this light. Indeed, Marjorie was too intent

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on the requirements of her position, the service was too novel, she was too doubtful of herself, to be critical of another. She was exacting now only with regard to herself. She was constantly haunted by a dread lest the task she had undertaken would prove beyond her strength, her skill. It was her chief concern to get herself well in hand during these days.

Whether right or wrong, this young woman had an unshaken conviction that if she failed — at least for a month — in the task she had assumed, it would be in the deepest sense a failure of *morale*. She would have tried herself and been found wanting. She had over-estimated her forces, her courage, her staying power. This consciousness, she felt, must always haunt and accuse her in the future, amid any happiness it might hold for her.

This stern exaction of herself had at least one advantage. It gave Marjorie calmness and self-poise in all her novel relations with the people about her.

The motives which had brought her to Cameron Brae would, of course, have been inconceivable to its mistress. She would have regarded them as wildly romantic, or the effect of a morbid conscience. But she was keenly alive to the difference between her present attendant and her former ones. It was a delightful sensation to Mrs. Cameron to feel those delicate hands about her hair and temples; it was pleasant to hear the fine-keyed voice, and something

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novel and agreeable to watch the graceful figure as it moved about the room, or the beautiful face as it bent over her, intent on some service.

If Mrs. Cameron had little heart, she had what is, perhaps, the next best thing to that — the tastes and habits of a lady. The proud, indifferent woman was thrown a good deal on her mettle. She was at times rather resentfully conscious of this, and reminded herself that Miss Day was virtually an upper servant. But she was forced to admit that a princess could not have conducted herself more perfectly, had circumstances forced her to take an inferior position. Mrs. Cameron had a secret feeling that she should fall below her own standards of good breeding if she failed to meet Marjorie on her own plane. She was invariably courteous in tone and bearing toward Miss Day. Dr. Amoury's representations no doubt had their influence in all this. But Marjorie herself had more than justified anything he had said in her favor.

Among the surprises which the new attendant afforded Mrs. Cameron, nothing was more marked than her readiness for any service. There was no shrinking from any task. Indeed, Marjorie showed a solicitude, an absorption in her work, much as though it were, for several hours of each day, the one thing in the world to her. It was a real pleasure to the luxurious invalid to lie and watch, between half-closed lids, the young, delicate face, whose lines

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reminded her of some finely-cut cameo, or some portraits she had admired in foreign studios.

Marjorie's performance of her evening *rôle* had been particularly grateful to Mrs. Cameron. It was the lady's habit to be read to an hour or two before she settled herself for the night. In this duty others had, for the most part, proved failures. The voices of some, the pronunciation of others, had teased her nerves like the shrilling of insects. Marjorie had been trained by her father, whose ear was critical. It was a positive delight to Mrs. Cameron to listen to the sensitive, low-keyed voice, which lent a new interest to some newspaper paragraph, or the bright gossip of some watering-place correspondent. It never struck Mrs. Cameron that the Newport column was religiously avoided.

There was other reading of a fragmentary kind, — a poem, a page that was like a picture in its word-painting of some natural scene, a brief story, anything likely to attract one's interest, and not tax attention too heavily. Mrs. Cameron soon learned it was safe to leave all selections to Miss Day. As time wore on and the two grew into more familiarity, Marjorie often made light, running comments on the reading. Mrs. Cameron responded graciously to these. They often struck her as clever and much to the point. Some of them, she thought, would have set a drawing-room of brilliant people into laughing.

Marjorie Day had, on the whole, found her life at

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Old Lanes vastly more agreeable than she had anticipated. That does not mean, however, that she had not, at times, struggles with herself, whose sharpness she must remember while she lived. It was no slight thing to wrench herself from her past, to change the whole habits and methods of her life. During this month she had had some terrible revulsions of mood, sinkings of heart, and homesickness of soul, when the motives which had brought her to Cameron Brae seemed wholly inadequate and absurd.

But these moments were most frequent and hardest at the beginning, before she had got herself well in hand. It was her conviction, at this time and always afterward, that she should never have got through with the first month at Old Lanes, had she not separated herself absolutely from all former influences and associations. So for the most part, and always in her calmest, most penetrative moods, Marjorie did not regret the step she had taken.

The afternoons, with the long leisures, absolutely her own, were the happiest part of her life at this time. She spent them mostly out-doors, wandering among the sleepy old highways, the charming lanes of the rugged, picturesque town. Nature does not disappoint those who turn to her for strength, solace, companionship. The great Mother took the young girl to her heart, and taught her something of the secret of her own calm and joy.

The sky, the earth, the sunshine, the commonest

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things too, — grass and wild flowers by the wayside, the tangles of thickets and fields, the glinting and gurgling of small brooks, whispering of winds, singing of birds, — all had fresh meanings and delight to the girl. She had found a new world in the every-day one. The eyes of her soul were opened. She saw deeper values, a new divineness in things. All work, even the smallest and humblest, took on some fresh beauty and sacredness to her feeling.

In moods like these Marjorie would contrast the gay life she had turned from with something which was almost like a recoil of soul and flesh. How inane, empty, external, it all seemed compared with this simple, wholesome life. Amid all that pomp and resplendence, Nature would never have shown her this beautiful, intimate side of herself. What a waste of all that was best and noblest in feeling and purpose seemed the empty gossip, the endless dawdling, of days so fair and resplendent on the surface. Would not the truest instincts grow faint, the noblest ideals and aims falter, in those luxurious atmospheres!

Marjorie never for an instant deceived herself. She was perfectly aware how, despite all her previous training, that dazzling, sensuous existence might have allured and charmed her irresistibly. Its graceful, æsthetic side would have appealed powerfully to her tastes. The aims and standards, the ambitions and prizes, of the fashionable world might have become to her also the things best worth living for!

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Sometimes she asked herself whether she should ever go back to these, ever become a part of the gay, bright-hued procession. But she did not give herself much concern about the future. Each day brought its own tasks, to which she gave an undivided attention; each day brought, too, its own satisfactions and delights. Marjorie's life was made up at this time of her work and her walks; and incredible as it would have seemed to most of those who had previously known her, she found abundant satisfaction in the two.

In this way the month came to an end at last. Marjorie awoke one morning with the consciousness that the period of her self-imposed silence and separateness was at an end. Her relations with her old life would be resumed. She could write Dr. Amoury and Mrs. Ainslee. They would forward the letters which must be awaiting her. Under all her crowding thoughts lay the secret, ineffable sense that she had not failed herself — that she had held to the path in which she had set her feet.

Mrs. Cameron had never alluded to the provisions which Dr. Amoury had insisted on, but she had faithfully carried them out. Indeed, the two women had been reticent regarding all personal matters outside of Miss Day's services. She wondered if Mrs. Cameron was aware that the time of her provisional engagement had ended. Marjorie had never set a high value on her own services. She thought it

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probable Mrs. Cameron might desire a more experienced attendant. The young woman reflected, as she went down-stairs that morning, that this might be her last day at Old Lanes. But she could make no plans until she knew. She was only certain that the month had not been lost for herself. She could never regret that she had come to Cameron Brae.

It appeared Mrs. Cameron *did* remember. It was after lunch, when she sat as usual in her invalid-chair before her writing-desk, and Marjorie — her duties over for several hours — was making up her mind to broach the subject uppermost in her thoughts, that Mrs. Cameron anticipated her by saying, —

"Will you please sit down, Miss Day?"

Marjorie took her seat in a small alcove by the window. It was a sultry day. She watched a humming-bird flashing in and out of a honeysuckle-vine which made a green darkness about a small side portico. How fair and restful it all was! She should be sorry to leave Cameron Brae.

The elder lady looked at the younger rather curiously.

"It is a month to-night since you came here, Miss Day," she said.

"Yes; I was about to speak of that, Mrs. Cameron."

The elder lady arranged the lace around a wrist delicate and shapely as in her girlhood. She rather hoped Marjorie would go on; but there were only

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silence in the cool, shaded room, and sound of summer winds and wings outside.

"I hope you may like to make another — a more permanent arrangement, Miss Day," said Mrs. Cameron graciously.

Marjorie did not catch the true drift of this remark. It was, then, as she had supposed. Mrs. Cameron wished her to understand that their relations were about to terminate.

"Thank you," she replied, and the dark eyes shone bright in the shadowy alcove. "I thought it probable you would prefer a person of larger experience in my place. I beg you will believe I have tried to do my best, imperfect as that may have been."

Mrs. Cameron was in her turn misled. She thought Marjorie intended her to understand that she must soon leave her. The sense of what she was about to lose gave her a feeling of dismay. She spoke on the impulse of the moment, —

"Have you not been comfortable in all respects, Miss Day? Is there anything which has not satisfied you?"

"There is nothing. I have been perfectly comfortable — thank you," answered Marjorie, a good deal surprised.

Mrs. Cameron was silent a moment. It was evident the next advance must come from herself, and there was too much at stake for her dignity to stand in the way.

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"I hoped you would like to remain longer, Miss Day — that the arrangement with Dr. Amoury might grow into a permanent one," she said in her most gracious tone.

"I am not quite clear." It was impossible to regard the surprise in Marjorie's tone as other than genuine. "Am I to understand, Mrs. Cameron, it is your wish I should remain longer?"

"Certainly. That is what I meant."

Again there was a brief silence. Marjorie's surprise and pleasure were so complete that for a moment words failed her. Then she said quietly, —

"I shall be glad to remain, Mrs. Cameron."

"Perhaps, then, we can make a more definite arrangement," rejoined the lady, much relieved and a little more on her guard.

This time there was a longer silence. Marjorie was conscious that her present position could not grow into a permanent one. She was aware of forces in herself which would become clamorous in a lengthened attendance on Mrs. Cameron. In a little while she would be straining at the leash. The grateful hiding, too, could not long remain a mystery. She had tried herself, and was willing that her world — all the world — should have its chatter and expletives, when the time came, over what she had done. Nobody — nothing, could rob her of the blissful feeling of self-reliance which she had attained during the last month.

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All these thoughts and a good many others flashed through Marjorie's brain as she sat there with the dim alcove lights hovering about her head.

"It would not be possible for me now, Mrs. Cameron to make a long engagement," she answered at last. "But I am very sensible of your kindness in suggesting it. I shall be glad, now I may be more confident of pleasing you, to remain a while longer."

This guarded reply was not all Mrs. Cameron had hoped for. But the end of the talk was that Marjorie agreed to remain another month. Mrs. Cameron saw that she did this with some hesitancy.

There was another subject which the lady now felt forced to broach. There had been, between herself and Miss Day, no allusion to the matter of wages.

When Dr. Amoury spoke of these to Marjorie she had felt too much distrust of herself to set them at a high value, and had named a price which he regarded as ridiculously inadequate. But reflecting that Mrs. Cameron was not inclined to haggle about money, he left the question for her to settle.

Mrs. Cameron found it, for the first time in her life, disagreeable to speak of wages. She prided herself on her aristocratic feeling, and regarded a wage-earner as a being immensely differentiated from herself. She did not suspect that the feeling proved there was a core of vulgarity in her nature.

It did seem, however, rather uncomfortably like addressing a guest when she said, —

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"That reminds me. There has been no settlement of — terms between us, I think."

"No," replied Marjorie calmly, as though the wage-receiver might be Mrs. Cameron herself. "I preferred to have that matter left entirely with you."

Mrs. Cameron hesitated. "I am quite willing to pay what you think a full equivalent, Miss Day."

"Thank you," said Marjorie, "I have, in this case, no standard. I might estimate my services too highly. I cannot expect what a more experienced person would be entitled to."

Evidently this young woman was not accustomed to making sharp bargains. Mrs. Cameron opened her writing-desk and took out an envelope.

"Will that be satisfactory?" she asked, and she held out the envelope.

"Oh, I cannot take those!" exclaimed Marjorie with a little deprecatory gesture, as she caught with a glance the full amount. "It cannot be possible I have earned them!"

"You will allow me to be the judge of that," Mrs. Cameron replied in her most gracious tones.

"But I must insist. I cannot consent to take something I have not in the least earned," and there was a little, half-imperious bridling of Marjorie's head, about which her father used to jest her.

Mrs. Cameron regarded the girl curiously a moment. Then she said, "Will you be satisfied, Miss

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Day, if I assure you that I have paid the same price for services I regard as less valuable than yours?"

A few minutes later Marjorie entered her room with a rapid, nervous step. Her eyes shone, her face was flushed with some strong feeling. She stopped suddenly when she was half-way across the chamber, held up two fresh fifty-dollar bank-notes, and waved them about her head in an excited, triumphant way.

"Papa, papa," she cried in a tender, tremulous voice, "can you see those where you are? Do you know what they mean? Your little Marjorie earned them — all herself — the first money she ever earned in her life!"

The next moment she tossed the notes on the table, threw herself on a lounge in one corner of the room, and with a sob, — her first one since she came to Old Lanes, — buried her face in the cushions.

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VIII

THE DRAMA WIDENS

"GREAT heavens!"

The young man who made this exclamation sprang to the railing of the tavern balcony in which he had been sitting since dinner, absorbed in some serious reflections. These had been suddenly interrupted by a peculiar, muffled sound, like distant thunder.

He glanced up the road, a long, bare, yellow highway, basking in the afternoon heat. He saw a pair of small, beautiful, coal-black horses, maddened with terror, tearing along the road. The creatures plunged on, neck to neck, with a swift, rhythmic beat of hoofs. The spume glittered white on quivering nostrils and heaving chests. The broken shafts dragged along the ground. The sight of that brute power suddenly let loose and gone mad with fright sent a thrill, half fear, half admiration, through the man's nerves.

But at that instant a new figure arrested his attention. A young woman had emerged from a by-path at right angles with the main road. She was rather tall and slender, and draped in some summer material of dark gray. A suppressed cry broke from

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the gazer as he saw the young woman, whose head was leaned slightly forward like a flower under a puff of wind, turn to cross the highway. She must have been much absorbed in her thoughts, for the plunging hoofs, the dragging shafts, had failed to arouse her.

The next moment the young man would have leaped the railing, although any effort to reach the stranger would have been hopeless. The foaming beasts were close upon her as she moved rapidly into the highway. But at that instant a small, wiry form darted, swift as an antelope, into the road. It was a boy. He was shouting and waving his hands frantically to the young woman. She barely had time to come to a dead stop. She did not perceive the peril close on her. It had passed before she was fairly conscious of it. The boy had not quite reached her. The horses had plunged by in the narrow space between them. The spume had dropped on the boy's cap; the hot breaths had flamed across the woman's cheeks; there was a rushing, trampling sound in her ears, a shadow of some huge, sweeping mass before her eyes. When the danger was passed, she stood, half stunned and motionless in the highway.

The watcher in the balcony had closed his eyes as the beasts came bearing straight upon the group. Strong man as he was, a cold shudder crept over him. When he looked again he saw the two figures drawn,

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sharp and motionless as statues, against the dazzling sky, the hot, bare highway.

"That boy was a hero!" he muttered to himself. He did not know when the horses passed by the tavern, so absorbed had he been in the human part of the drama. He heard a hue and cry up the road. People were out now to stop the horses. It was too late for him to join in the hunt. He had been the only witness of the scene, which probably did not occupy more than half a minute. The tavern stood quite by itself. A little farther up the road, whence the shouts came, were houses and a store or two.

"Better go at once," the young man told himself, "and see if he could be of any service to those two" —

"Jack Elderby!"

A heavy hand laid on his shoulder prevented him from going over the parapet.

He faced about, and met a young man with light, thick hair and long mustache. He was very deeply tanned, of a strong, muscular build, and about his companion's height. His whole appearance, even to his dress, suggested the traveller, seasoned by suns and seas. The surprise had come so suddenly on the late excitement, the new-comer was himself so changed by three years' rough-and-tumble in all sorts of climates and places, that his friend did not at once recognize him. But with the merry, honest eyes looking into his, he could not long be mistaken.

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"Joe Kennedy!"

The sudden lighting-up of the face, the hearty tones, the grasp of the hand, made a welcome which must have satisfied any man.

"It's I, Jack, still in the flesh, — at least what's left of it — after beating up and down the world, and thrusting my nose into every nook and corner of this precious old planet, and bringing back to my native heath a somewhat battered old hulk and a little wiser brain than I took away from it."

"If ever one man was glad to see another, you behold him at this moment, Joe Kennedy! But, I say, what have you gained by all these tumblings up and down the world, which have robbed you of your avoirdupois, and turned you brown as an old Bedouin?"

"This is the sum." The young traveller struck an attitude. "I have found human nature very much the same stuff in cities and on deserts, in kings' palaces and beggars' huts!"

"And you have actually spent three years cracking the hard nut of the world to get at that kernel of wisdom! I shall stay at home, Joe."

This sort of chaffing masqued the strong feeling between the two young men who had so unexpectedly come upon each other in the country tavern at Old Lanes.

It was nothing more than this, though it had seen better days when the town was at the zenith of its

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prosperity. The building now stood a tall, brownish-yellow, many-windowed structure, with a general air of age and approaching decay, on the main highway, half a mile from the centre of the town. It still enjoyed more or less transient patronage from guests at the summer resorts in the neighborhood. The roads about Old Lanes were picturesque, and the hostelry was renowned for its dinners.

The two young men who met in the balcony that hot summer afternoon had been chums at Harvard and very fond of each other.

"Sit down, old fellow," said Kennedy, setting the example, "and tell us how we happened to conjunct here."

"That is very easily done. I rode over from Red Ledge this morning, where Hester, her friend Miss Halifax, and I are stopping at the hotel. I started off on Hercules, my huge old bay, that I brought on with me. What with these fine old roads, and Hercules' pace, we made a morning of it. So I pulled up here in the heat to dine and give my horse a rest. There you have it! Now, what turned you up, Joe, in this remote corner of Christendom?"

"The most commonplace explanation possible," stretching his long, thin limbs, as he sat in the old-fashioned rocking-chair. "Train was late — failed to make connections at junction. Inquiries revealed the fact that there was a tavern three miles off, with substantial provender for man and beast. Footed

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the distance in about half an hour. Had just come out from dinner when I caught, through the open door, the sight of a pair of square shoulders that would have had a familiar look at the antipodes. There you have the whole story."

"Not quite, Joe. You haven't told where you started from or to what point you were bound."

"Haven't you got over that old trick of getting to the bottom of a thing? I've been home just a week. Visited all the old places and people. Found I had a hankering after an old comrade of mine, a rascally fellow, to whom I could say with Beaumont, —

"'What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid!'

Learned that he was at Red Ledge, a brand new summer resort among the hills. Boarded the train for that point a little after sunrise this morning!"

"You dear old Joe! Let's shake hands again on that!"

After this ceremony had been performed with much heartiness between the young men, something recurred to young Elderby which made him spring from his seat and stare eagerly up the road. It stretched lonely and hot in the sunshine. Not a human being was in sight. The scene which he had witnessed before the arrival of his friend appeared now like a dream. Where had that group — the slender, graceful woman and the ragamuffin of a boy — vanished?

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Jack Elderby wondered for a moment, and then turned to his companion, and was soon engaged in a talk which made him utterly oblivious of everything else. The two sat in the tavern balcony while the hours went by, and the hot summer afternoon waned. The talk was that of two clever and well-equipped young men, who had seen the world, and to whom it had turned its kindly side. Their friendship had been stronger than the ordinary one of college chums. The tie would hold them all their lives, for it was formed of many common sympathies and ideas, though these did not lie on the surface, and the young men did not strike the casual observer as much more alike in character than they were in physique. For a while the talk dwelt mostly on the events of the last three years. Then it branched off — as talk between the two always would, though they lived to be old men — to the university life, to the good *camaraderie*, the fun, and the larks, the base-ball games, and the boat-races. Their shouts made the old rafters ring, as they recounted one scene after another at the "Mermaid," which some of his class-mates had named Jack's rooms because they formed the rendezvous of so many youths with hilarious spirits and clever brains. But though the mirth was sure to run high, and the Sophomoric wit and repartee were often drowned in roars of laughter, there was something in the atmosphere of those rooms which prevented their *habitués* from dropping into coarse

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talk or boorish manners, which was probably more than could be always claimed for its immortal namesake.

But the talk, though set to this key of gay, youthful memories, was constantly slipping into a graver vein, as was natural with two young men who had brains and convictions, and were now near the end of their twenties.

"One would think by the way we have gone on," exclaimed young Kennedy, after one of their prolonged roars of laughter, "we had been simply a pair of young bacchanals — sybarites; and yet I think we were something more than those. I remember what serious talks we used to have, what grave outlooks we two cubs used to take sometimes of the future — eh, Jack?"

"Yes; I remember," answered the other, with a change of tone and look. "A good deal of illusion and nonsense, doubtless, mixed up with all the talk and outlooks. But I can't jest about them, for all that, Joe. I think there lay at bottom with both of us a feeling which I found Lord Lytton had expressed so well that I wrote it in those days in my note-book, and would have died before showing it to anybody."

"What was it?"

"'Dream, O youth, dream manfully and nobly, and thy dreams shall be prophets!'"

"That was like you, Jack," said young Kennedy,

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putting his brown hand on his friend's knee, and looking at him with a good deal of his heart in his eyes. "Well, old fellow, what do you say, — have the dreams — any of them — been prophets?"

The man whom he addressed was rather tall, straight-shouldered, well built. There was a vigorous ease in all his attitudes and movements. His abundant hair and long mustache only escaped being black by a shade. Jack Elderby was not handsome, certainly, but one never thought of that a second time. His features were cut in large, but irregular lines, and the modelling of his head, which he carried spiritedly, would have struck a thoughtful observer. His eyes were of a dark, bright, hazel gray; pleasant eyes to look in, eyes to trust, and capable of manifold expression.

There was, however, a vigorous, forceful something in this young man's presence, which any catalogue of his looks must miss. It was a quality, or combination of qualities, difficult to define, but which would make him attractive all his life. His very presence gave one an impression of strength, power, courage. There was something bracing and animating in his manner, his looks, his voice. He made life seem something interesting, agreeable, worth making the most of. Feebler vitalities were encouraged and invigorated by this bright, forceful nature. There was a cheerful confidence about the young man which was delightfully contagious. He seemed to radiate

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life, heartiness, good-will. People were carried out of themselves for the time, under his influence.

Jack Elderby was called a "man's man," but women admired him too. His electric vitality attracted all sorts of people. This showed itself in his boyhood. It was as settled as a law of nature in the household, that the servants "would do anything for Jack."

Young Elderby shook his head at his companion's question with a grimace, half-playful, half something deeper. "Joe," he said, "I was sure your old *rôle* of Rhadamanthus would crop out before we got through! When it did, I always made a clean breast of it. I have had an easy time, certainly, during these last three years. Everything — as I look back on it — seems to have moved prosperously. Hardly a crumpled rose-leaf to disturb my slumbers. You know my father's old friend offered me a partnership in his law firm. You know, too, it is one of the oldest and most highly regarded in Boston. It was a huge piece of luck for me, and I have kept pretty steadily at work, and never regretted my choice of a profession. As for the world, I have no fault to find with it. It is my honest conviction it has treated me better than I deserve. That is its way with the fools and worse, you know. Think what sort of hospitality the best of the race — the great souls and leaders — have found at this same world's hands!"

"Yes, I know. But why aren't you satisfied with your share?"

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"Aren't you taking rather too much for granted? Is a man necessarily an ingrate because the *Cui Bono* of things haunts him a good deal?"

Joe Kennedy did not reply for some time. He looked at his old friend with keen, searching eyes.

"The trouble with you, Jack, is," he said at last, "that you lack a sufficient working motive. That is what our old tutor used to say of you. 'Elderby was cut out on a large pattern. If he fails to make his mark in the world, it will be for want of a sufficient motive. There's the rub! The Fates have made everything smooth and easy for him — have given him no chance to show his mettle. The critical, negative spirit of the time has penetrated him a good deal. The danger is, with his *laissez-faire* philosophy, he will go sailing down the stream which happens to be, in his case, smooth and flower-bordered. But a fine fellow will be spoiled. Elderby has brains and will, if he would only put them to the close tug and wrestle which bring out the man. He has a lovable personality, and he is capable, with sufficient motive, of a noble life.'"

Jack had listened intently. He lounged back now in his chair, and after a moment's silence said, in a tone which made Kennedy suspect the tutor's speech had pricked his conscience a little, —

"If that fine talk weren't the purest rubbish, Joe, as applied to my case, I say, what is a fellow to do! I was born into an easy place — I grant that — and

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have had an easy time of it. But when things were settled at our father's death there was precious little left for Hester and me. The Pater had been generous — it was not in him to be otherwise — and let us have our swing while he lived. Luckily, I had my profession to fall back on; but just as I was making up my mind that I had been a lazy dog, and must go down into the thick of the fight, like the poorest fellow, for all my agreeable antecedents, lo! Fate sent me a splendid opening. It is only fair to say my seniors in the firm don't think I have shirked my share of the work, since I joined them. My income, of course, carries me through the year in very comfortable shape, though I haven't set at this date about building up a fortune."

"Of course not. You wouldn't be Jack Elderby if you had."

"Talk about compelling motives, Joe! Again I ask, What is a fellow to do? He can't make them to order; at least, it would take a better man, I suspect, than the one before you to do that."

"There is a motive, however! I must speak with a certain dubiousness, as I have had no experience in that line." There was a twinkle in Joe's eyes.

"What is that?" inquired Elderby, turning and facing his companion.

"Well, 'without any slips of prolixity, or crossing the plain highway of talk,' the best men say, there is no influence so powerful, so stimulating to a man's

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soul and life, as the love of a good woman. It's time for you to think about that. Jack Elderby, have you ever been in love?"

"No; I have had young fancies, but — never in the way you mean, Joe."

A second thought smote the young man's conscience. Perhaps this was what made him ask so suddenly, "What do you say for yourself, Joe?"

"That your reply has, at this stage of my experience, answered for both of us."

A little later the talk ran in another vein. Joe informed his friend that he was tired of knocking about the world, and intended to start shortly for Montana and inspect a cattle-ranch which an uncle had bequeathed him. He might settle down a while, with the Indians and the grizzlies for neighbors."

"Keep a sharp lookout for your scalp off there, old fellow," interposed Jack.

"I have brought it out of some deadly perils already," said Kennedy, getting up and pacing the balcony. "Jack, it is a good thing to see you once more. I have dreamed of this hour out on the deserts, in the heart of strange cities, and in fierce storms on the sea, when each wave threatened to swamp the ship; and I have come back to find you the same obstinate, lovable old scamp you always were."

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He stood still and regarded his friend with a look in his eyes that was like a woman's.

Jack insisted on Joe's returning with him to the hotel. A horse was found at the tavern; and, in the sunset, the two young men rode over the hills to Red Ledge.

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IX

DONIL KEMP — RAGAMUFFIN AND HERO

MARJORIE DAY, faint and half-stunned, stood gazing in fascinated terror at the horses as they dashed up the highway; and, as she gazed, she perceived what the peril had been.

The boy, too, stared after the animals with his light, scared eyes, his mouth wide open, his breath quick with excitement.

The thunder of hoofs, the dragging of shafts, grew fainter in the distance, and soon after the horses had disappeared.

The woman and the boy turned and looked at each other. Marjorie's brain was whirling, her breath coming in long gasps. It was all she could do to keep from falling.

"Are you hurt?" she asked eagerly.

"Not a scratch." The voice, though somewhat gruff, was quite distinct, and in an instant the speaker had added, half to himself, "It was an all-fired tight squeeze though!" and he stared curiously at the lady, as though she were some species belonging to another planet.

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What a boy he was! Marjorie took him in with one of those flashing glances which burn a face and figure into the memory for all time. He was ragged, sunburned, grimed, barefooted. His stained, rimless cap surmounted a mat of ragged, dust-colored hair. The narrow, tanned face afforded plentiful evidence of lack of care, and suggested insufficient diet. But the striking feature of the boy's face was the nose, which stood out, obstinate and aggressive, as though it resented being there. The remaining features did not seem able to maintain proper relations with such an organ, but had an inadequate, disproportioned look. The nose struck Marjorie as portentous, ridiculous. The long, high line of the bridge reminded her of a pelican's bill.

Dazed and shaken, she felt a decided inclination to laugh: the next moment she was making a strong effort to suppress the sob at her throat.

"You have saved my life!" she said, while the boy continued to stare at her from under light, bristly lashes. "What made you do it?"

"I seed them horses a tearin' along like mad, an' you comin' straight in their way not mindin', an' I jest let out for you lively."

"It was a brave, splendid deed for a boy to do."

This one had nothing to say. His eyes dropped, and he wriggled his big toe awkwardly in the hot sand.

Marjorie placed her hand on the soiled, rimless cap.

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"Do you know that you risked your life to save mine?" she asked earnestly.

"I hadn't no time to think o' that." The boy looked up swiftly. "Crackey! it was a rush and a yell, or you'd 'a' gone under — sure!"

Marjorie shuddered again. When she spoke once more it was almost to repeat her words.

"It took a very brave boy to rush right in the teeth of those maddened horses."

This time the head went down again, and the toes began their old motions in the sand.

Praise evidently was something new to this boy, while he was quite unconscious of having done anything to deserve it.

"What is your name?"

"Donil Kemp." The head went up again.

"Donil Kemp," repeated Marjorie. "Are you sure you don't mean Donald?"

"No; it's jest Donil."

"Where do you live?"

"In 'Bijah Hearn's house. That's off on the road that leads to Bramble Creek."

"Don't you live with your own people, Donil?"

"If it's my own folks you mean, I ain't got none, though they knew my father afore he died, and they took me. That's eight year ago now."

Marjorie found herself forced to be satisfied for the time with these scant fragments of Donil's autobiography. Every nerve was quivering with the

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shock she had undergone. She must return to Cameron Brae at once. Her first impulse was to take the boy with her. But a second thought showed her the imprudence of doing this. Mrs. Cameron had the nervous susceptibilities of a chronic invalid. She gave strict orders regarding the people who should be admitted to her grounds. A figure like Donil's had never been seen within those elegant precincts. His appearance would involve explanations with the servants. Marjorie wished to keep all knowledge of the event which had barely escaped being a terrible tragedy from Mrs. Cameron, who had so strong an aversion to hearing anything disagreeable.

The girl had left the house not long after the interview which had followed the lunch. In the absence of any real human companionship she turned, at this time, to nature for help and sympathy in every important event of her life.

She was too much absorbed in all that happened before she left the house to perceive the frightened horses when she turned into the road.

Marjorie's limbs were hardly equal now to dragging her back to Cameron Brae. She had not brought her purse, and a little change would have seemed a pitiful reward for one who had just risked his life for her own. She could not leave without arranging for another meeting.

"Donil," she asked, without any very definite idea

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as to what the question would lead to, "where were you going this afternoon when you saw me?"

"Over to Bramble Creek. *Miss* Hearn wanted me to git some fish for supper."

The answer furnished a happy suggestion. "Bramble Creek empties, I believe, into the river, not far above Moose Falls. You must know where those are."

"I reckon so — go there about every day."

"I go there too, very often. That is just the place where we can see each other, and have a long talk — I hope it will be more than one — together. Will you be sure to come? I shall be there between two and five o'clock in the afternoon. If you miss me once, you must try again until you find me. Can I depend on you, Donil?"

He looked the beautiful lady in the face with his light, greenish-gray, honest eyes, and replied, "Yes; you can, sure, missus."

She smiled on him then, and put out her hand, — the dainty hand in its gray silk glove, — and took the grimed fingers in her own. She did not say a word more, but turned and walked swiftly away; and he stood in the road looking after her, as though he had seen a goddess, and his little thin profile, made up mostly of that enormous nose, stood out sharply against the afternoon light.

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X

A DAY AT RED LEDGE HOSTELRY

As Jack Elderby bathed his face vigorously before breakfast, the subject came up which had engrossed his thoughts as he sat in the tavern balcony at Old Lanes. During the two days of Joe Kennedy's visit, the matter had receded to the background. But it was sure to recur as soon as the young man was left to himself. Indeed, it was to give the subject due consideration that Jack had taken the long ride two days before, when, much to his surprise, he found himself in the vicinity of Old Lanes. If his decision proved an affirmative one, which the chances were greatly in favor of its doing, it would be followed by an unprecedented act on Jack Elderby's part, for he would ask a woman to marry him.

The woman was Grace Halifax.

It was really no lover's fear as to the result of his proposal which lay at the bottom of all these preliminary reflections. They were out of the line of the young man's temperament too, for he usually came to his resolutions in a rapid, instinctive fashion, and acted on them very promptly. He had too much innate gallantry to admit to himself even, a confidence

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in his success as the wooer of a beautiful and charming woman. Therefore it is only fair to suppose the feeling did not have its source wholly in masculine vanity. Indeed, the young man's reflections took one form with a frequency which, if spoken, might have given them the air of being a little forced.

"Grace is such a beautiful creature! If, with all that train of adorers, she will take up with her old friend, I must consider myself the luckiest of men for the rest of my life. But then, Jack Elderby, you haven't put your fate to the touch; you are not at all sure of winning such a prize."

So he had rung the changes in his thoughts during the ride from Red Ledge to Old Lanes. If, later, the frightened horses, the young woman and the boy, and afterward Joe Kennedy, had not appeared upon the scene, young Elderby would, most likely, have made up his mind to propose on the first opportunity.

Nothing had occurred to make any change in his feeling; but somehow the matter had all to be gone over again. He was in a brown study, while he bathed his face and brushed his hair. When he left his room, he told himself he had made up his mind.

An hour later, as Jack Elderby sat on the wide piazza of the Red Ledge hostelry, two ladies approached him. He rose on the instant, and the greetings which followed showed at once that the three people were familiar with each other.

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The two women were very unlike. Each made a fine foil to the other. One was a brunette: she was the smaller of the two, and had brilliant eyes, a rich complexion, a red glow of cheek and lips, with an abundance of glossy black hair. There was a life and sparkle in her face and smile which made her very attractive. Everything about her — bearing, tones, air — showed her familiarity with polished society. Occasionally somebody insisted there was a family likeness between Jack Elderby and his sister; but if it existed, it was too subtle to often strike people.

The other woman, whose height exceeded that of her companion by several inches, was a tall, stately blonde. Her complexion was like snow; her eyes, under golden lashes, had a sparkle like that of sapphire seas; a mass of hair, of a rare yellowish tint, made an exquisite framing for her face. With that stately column of throat, with that glowing hair, and the fine, delicate bloom of her skin, there was a kind of radiance and opulence of beauty about Grace Halifax which suggested the portraits of the old Venetian painters. Indeed, high-carved balconies and cushioned gondolas, and all things suggestive of luxurious leisure, seemed the fitting accompaniment of a beauty which was certainly rare.

The two women wore breakfast dresses of some cool summer stuff, but one gown was a pale yellow shade, and the other a delicate lavender. There was

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a rather noticeable absence of ornament about both the ladies.

"How long have you been waiting for us, Jack?" inquired the brunette.

"An hour perhaps, Hester. I could not give a glance at the morning paper with such a landscape. The only drawback was that you two weren't down to share it with me." And he made a comprehensive gesture toward the world which stretched away from and below the piazza.

The great modern hostelry to which Red Ledge owed its sudden fame as a summer resort, stood on the highest of a series of terraces laid out in the broad, irregular style in which Nature does her work. On these sloping terraces there cropped out among the pines and cedars, occasional bare, smooth, red and purplish masses of porphyry. To these ledges, thrown out sharply against the dark greens of the woods, the small village, somewhat huddled on the bank of the river below, owed its name. The hotel, at least six hundred feet above the river, stood with its verandas, porticos, and balconies, on a wide plateau in the midst of grounds ornamented with all graceful modern devices of shrubberies and hedges, of walks and arbors. Footpaths wandered off among pretty coppices and picturesque nooks, and then dropped by easy slopes and winding ways from one terrace to another, and at last joined the village highway. The hotel, which rose spacious and airy from its cool site,

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commanded, from its several piazzas, a vast sweep of diversified and beautiful landscape. This had, of course, the distinct New England features — the low expanse of rich meadow-lands, the rugged, climbing pastures, the ripening harvest-fields and orchards, with the villages giving a human touch to the scene, as they nestled and gleamed among the summer greenery. Farther off were the hills, their summits in all varieties of sculpture, thrown sharply against the sky, and away on the northern horizon rose the granite walls of the White Mountains in the far distance, dim, gray, brooding, like summer mists.

Jack Elderby's companions turned now and gazed on the landscape which his swift, emphatic gesture had indicated. The scene stretched before them drowned in dews, sparkling in sunshine, all alive with the fresh, luminous air, the breath of wild blossoms, with the dazzling sky, and the smiling world of that summer morning.

"I suspect we have lost one of the finest sunrises of the year," said young Elderby. "Nature herself can hardly surpass this achievement. It is a simple outrage on her to lie in bed on such a morning."

Grace Halifax turned all the dazzling of her sapphire eyes upon the young man. "I have lost all faith in sunrises," she said in her gay, rallying tones, "since the Rigi disappointed me. We climbed up there in the chill and the mists, and rose at the most unearthly hour next morning; but the sun never

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deigned a glimmer of himself. It was nothing but cold fog, indescribable dismalness. I registered a vow at the time that no rising sun should ever again tempt me from my pillow. After such a snub I would never again wait on his majesty."

The brother and sister laughed, less perhaps at the matter of this speech, than at something bright and rallying in the manner.

"Grace," said Jack, his dark eyes gazing admiringly on her, "it must be a dreadfully old story to you, and I always was a horrible bungler at paying a woman a compliment, but I never saw you looking lovelier than at this moment."

Beauty and belle as she was, with all the changes of flattery rung forever in her ears, the soft pink flush deepened charmingly in her cheek.

"Poor Grace!" broke in Jack's sister on the instant. "Can't even you let her alone, Jack? She must be so tired of stuff of that sort!"

Jack Elderby, however, knew his sister. He was certain the speech had gratified her quite as much as though it had been addressed to herself.

"If you will promise never to offend in this fashion again," replied the young lady, with her most gracious smile, "I will forgive you, Jack, especially as this happens to be your first offence."

"My first, Grace! Have I really been such a boor all my life?" asked the young man lightly enough, yet there was just a touch of surprise in his

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tone, almost as though he had become conscious of something lacking on his part.

"You may count yourself lucky to have been spared, my dear." Mrs. Wilmarth came to the rescue again in her merry, tactful way. "If Jack really thinks a woman superlatively charming, she will be the last one in the world to hear it from his lips."

"I believe you are right there, Hester." He spoke with a sudden access of gravity. "It is not every man's habit to praise the people he most cares for to their faces."

"Then Grace, to whom you have actually paid your first compliment, and I, to whom you never paid one, may feel highly flattered," exclaimed Mrs. Wilmarth, who was clever at repartee.

"Yes, Jack, I really begin to set a high value on your remark," added Grace; but she did not assume that air of half-languid indifference which she had found so effective with scores of admirers. There was a quality in this man's praise which all others lacked for her.

Then Jack proposed to the ladies that they should have a walk about the piazza before they went in to breakfast. Numbers of guests had already gathered to enjoy the scene and the delicious air. The trio, moving leisurely about the piazzas, much absorbed in their talk, which ran largely in a strain of badinage, formed a striking group. The women — pre-eminently Grace, with her proud, blond beauty, — were

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the centre of attraction. But Mrs. Wilmarth, with her fine eyes and brilliant style, had her share of regard. The man between them had a certain individuality of look and bearing which makes itself felt, even in a crowd. He gave a distinct impression of being a gentleman.

"How delicious this sparkling air is!" he said, inhaling it in long breaths. "What do you two feminines propose to do with such a glorious day?"

Mrs. Wilmarth answered. "That depends a good deal on yourself, Jack. Now Joe Kennedy is off, and you two can't be living over your old Harvard larks together, as though there were nobody else in the world, I suppose we may count upon seeing something of you."

"Poor old Joe! I fancied you must be immensely grateful to him for taking me out of the way, and giving — well — some other people a chance."

"And I suppose it never occurred to you that we might possibly like to be protected from — well — some other people."

"No. I believed Grace and you equal to taking care of yourselves amid any crowd of — admirers. But I shall be happy to devote myself to you two against all the world to-day."

"With that settled, then," continued Mrs. Wilmarth, "I think we will have the pony-phaeton out after breakfast. Will that suit you, Grace?"

"It will be delightful, Hester."

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"And I, if you will allow me the honor, will go along on Hercules."

"Of course, Jack, we shall need your protection going down into this humdrum, dead-virtuous, old New England hamlet," said Miss Halifax merrily.

"I hope you are not going to refuse my escort because you will not need it."

"No; only it seems a pity you should have no occasion to show your mettle."

This gay trifling went on, for a quarter of an hour perhaps. Then Jack suggested that the horses should be ordered out early, as there would be later a raging heat in the valleys. He would see the coachman, and afterward join the ladies at breakfast.

Jack Elderby had left his room that morning resolved to ask Grace Halifax to be his wife. He had, as we have seen, the temperament which follows decision by prompt action. If an opportunity occurred, he meant to propose that day.

But an opportunity meant with him something more than suitable proximity. His imagination must have its satisfactions also. These certainly could not be found in a hotel drawing-room. They would only be complete amid the ampler drawing-room of nature, with her grand spaces of sky and earth and atmosphere. He must have a sense of that strong, tender, brooding presence — like a benediction upon the most tender and solemn moment of his life.

The young woman herself would have smiled at

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all this; but then, Jack Elderby had never asked a woman to be his wife, while to Grace Halifax a proposal had long been an old story, — a matter-of-course affair, more or less gratifying to her self-love.

Grace Halifax was the daughter of a manufacturer who had amassed a fortune in a town in western Massachusetts. The family, which consisted of his wife and two daughters, had lived for many years in Boston. Grace had been brought up in an atmosphere of household idolatry. She was her father's favorite, and was considered more beautiful than her sister, who had married an English title.

Grace had joined her sister abroad, and had travelled much on the Continent, where her beauty attracted an endless train of admirers. Her parents did not share the foreign tastes of their children, and returned to their Boston home. Each of the daughters would probably inherit half a million, although this sum had expanded to several times that amount in the popular estimation.

The ladies had a couple of hours' drive in Mrs. Wilmarth's pony-phaeton, which, with the small, glossy-black span, and silver-mounted harnesses, were the wonder and admiration of the villagers. Jack accompanied the phaeton on Hercules. Though they met with no adventures, the drive through the delicious morning air, down the smooth-graded slopes, into the village, was most agreeable to all concerned.

Mrs. Wilmarth was aware that her husband hardly

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approved of taking the beautiful, high-blooded little creatures among the rough hill-roads about Red Ledge. She had carrried her point, however, as, being a woman of tact and spirit, she usually did, without any serious domestic jar. But she bore her husband's wishes in mind when she ordered the coachman to return.

Jack accompanied the ladies to his sister's parlor. This was a large, elegantly fitted-up apartment. Each window commanded an extensive and noble landscape. The lawn-tennis, which had been agreed on in the drive, was tacitly given up. Mrs. Wilmarth noticed that her brother did not, as was his morning habit, join the gentlemen for a game of billiards. It struck her there was a subtle difference in his manner toward Grace. She had caught his eyes bent on her friend one or twice during the drive. It seemed to Hester Wilmarth she had never seen her brother look at any other woman in just that way.

She secretly congratulated herself. She had set her heart on her brother's marrying Grace Halifax. She had told herself she would move heaven and earth for this consummation. In pursuance of her plan, she had invited Grace to accompany her to Red Ledge, after she had prevailed upon Jack to spend his vacation there. The young people would be thrown much together. Affairs would be under Mrs. Wilmarth's quiet but adroit manipulation. It had been a master-stroke of diplomacy on her part to

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carry Grace off with her to Red Ledge. Other friends had their programmes for the young beauty's "American summer," as her sister, Lady Ambleton, rather contemptuously termed it. The lady had her own ambitions for Grace, and had not approved of her return home in the spring.

But Mrs. Wilmarth believed that her plan could never have been brought to a successful issue, had it not fallen in with the young woman's secret wishes. Trifles, light as air, had satisfied the sister that her brother's chances were fairer than that of any suitor in Grace Halifax's train.

Hester Wilmarth was an ambitious woman. Though she was not a heartless one, her gods were the gods of the world — wealth, social prestige, fashion, and all the rest. She loved her brother better than anything in the world. They were the last of their family. She felt it would be a splendid triumph for Jack, if he could carry off the youngest daughter of the Halifaxes — the beauty, belle, and heiress — before all her other suitors.

But Hester Wilmarth was, on certain lines, an acute reader of character. The all-important question was whether Jack would be ready to play his *rôle* in the drama she had arranged for him.

She would have felt more secure had she known less of him. In her heart of hearts she thought him the most splendid fellow in the world — clever, honorable, lovable. But she knew, too, that he had his

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obstinacies, and what she called his prejudices. He had, too, what she regarded as some rather impossible standards and ideals. For these Mrs. Wilmarth had a half-confused feeling, partly respect, partly disapproval. But she did not intend these should stand, if she could help it, in the way of her brother's best good.

The Wilmarth and Halifax families — both the elder and younger members — had been intimate. In Boston they had lived near each other. The girls had attended the same schools, and later moved in the same social circles. Mrs. Wilmarth had been fond of Grace, and fancied no young woman would suit her so well as a sister-in-law.

Hester had no doubt of Jack's liking for her friend. But was he in love with her? There was the rub! If he were not, what arguments or appeals would sway the young man? He had certain high instincts of honor. Would they not confirm him in a determination not to marry a woman whom he did not love, no matter how brilliant or desirable the match might be? These questions Mrs. Wilmarth pondered in her own mind, without being able to reach a conclusion. There was another point with her. She could never be sure about Jack until she saw him at safe anchorage in the harbor of matrimony.

"I know him," she mused. "Jack doesn't wear his heart on his sleeve. But he has romance enough

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at bottom to make any degree of rashness and obstinacy possible on his part if a woman should cross his path and strike his imagination. Cophetua and the beggar-maid are well enough to read about, but one doesn't want that sort of thing in one's own family."

The three bestowed themselves in comfortable attitudes in the large, cool apartment. Hester's discernment was not at fault. Her brother was looking at Grace Halifax with a new feeling to-day. She was invested with a new interest — a new sacredness to him, as she sat there in the bloom and radiance of her beauty, the woman whom, in a little while, he meant to ask to share his life! In all the chances and changes of the future — in every gladness and every grief — they must be set apart together. They would make the deepest joy and blessedness of each other's lives — they two — Grace Halifax and he!

A good many thoughts and feelings of this kind stirred in the young man's brain and heart. He wanted to be something braver, better, manlier, than he had ever been before. Above all things he meant to be loyal, tender, with a man's tenderness and loyalty to this young woman if she gave herself to him.

Grace Halifax was a seasoned coquette. She was quite conscious of some subtle change in Jack's manner and tones, and had had quite too many

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lovers not to suspect what all this forestalled. But it must also be admitted that no anticipations of a proposal ever gave her the same pleasure. She was socially ambitious. She had received brilliant offers abroad, and had declined some of these with a keen sense of all which she was putting away. Many men amused her — flattered her vanity — allured her ambition, but what heart she possessed had been given to Jack Elderby. She had made up her mind, when the time came, and with some coquettish dallying of course, to accept him.

Indeed, Miss Halifax's pride had been somewhat piqued by Jack's slowness in declaring himself. The bright, cordial ease of his manner, when they met, was a little too much in the old boyish vein. It missed something of the lover's.

That it was not in Jack Elderby's fate to become this was, however, a possibility which Miss Halifax never admitted to herself. She was accustomed to see men inthralled —

"In her strong toil of grace."

It was with her as settled a matter as one of nature's laws, that everything she desired should gravitate to her. It was her fixed conviction that her beauty, her charms, her tastes, her inborn superiority to ordinary human clay, gave her a divine right to whatever was finest and choicest in the world. And this was largely the world's fault,

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which had done its best to spoil its favorite. She never dreamed that under the lovely blond flesh, and all the beguilement of her charms, was a narrow nature, a shallow heart.

"With a mercury nearing the nineties, lawn-tennis, billiards, croquet, are out of the question," said Mrs. Wilmarth, after she and Grace had disposed themselves in easy-chairs, so arranged as to intercept any currents of cool air from the open windows. "Jack, you are our solitary resource this morning."

"I am at your service, only I have a wholesome recollection of all that statement used to involve with you and Grace."

This jesting remark gave Hester just the cue she wanted. Nothing would suit her better than to have the talk revive old scenes and associations.

"Do you hear that, Grace?" she exclaimed in simulated indignation. "Do you remember when we were innocent, callow creatures, and Jack the most autocratic specimen of young masculinity that ever stood in boots? What a race he used to lead us! How he was always getting us into scrapes and perils!"

"Of course, Hester dear, I remember and shudder!"

There was an arch gleam of the sapphire under those golden lashes.

"How is a fellow going to defend himself under such general accusations?" asked Jack with sus-

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picious gravity. "I suppose it is hopeless to imagine you will condescend to particulars. My own recollections of those days, however, are vivid. They bring up to me now a small, abject-looking biped in remorseless bondage to a pair of spoiled, imperious little grigs. They were always plotting some mischief for which he was to be held responsible. I cannot recall a single instance in which he had the moral pluck to assert himself, and throw off the yoke of those two malicious little elves."

"Speak, Grace!" adjured Mrs. Wilmarth. "Condescend," as he says, "to particulars! Set his young sins before his face!"

"They are like the sands of the seashore!" she said, her eyes sparkling with laughter, and the glow in her cheeks a little deepened by the heat or the talk. "There, for instance, was the time when you and Hester joined us at Aunt Ellen's in Newton, for a week of the Christmas holidays. One day you, Jack Elderby, beguiled us into skating on the pond. Of course, Hester and I had not the faintest idea of danger. The ice was thin; it broke; I had a ducking, and a horrible scare. Happily the water wasn't over my head at that point. There was Hester sobbing on the bank, and you, on the cracking ice, dragging me up, — a drenched, shivering bit of humanity, while you shouted as you tugged and pulled, —

"'Hold on like grim death, Grace! I'll save you or drown too!'"

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"That was so characteristic!" subjoined Hester when they were all through laughing. "I remember it too, as though it happened yesterday."

"I acknowledge that youthful escapade," said Jack, resuming his mock gravity. "I had to pay dearly for it, however, as I was promptly summoned home, and treated to long paternal admonitions. But that was my solitary instance of juvenility run wild."

"Solitary!" echoed Grace. "Do you remember that summer at the seashore? It must have been the year following the pond tragedy. There you imperilled our necks again! At your suggestion, Hester and I mounted Old Whitey, an ancient, gaunt-ribbed farm-horse, with a habit of balking. Whitey was not used to feminine riders, and a pair at that. She threw us off in the lane, and took to her heels! Unearthly shrieks, bumped foreheads, and scratched noses, ensued. You, Jack Elderby, had meanwhile disappeared from the scene on a half-broken colt which you had found in the next pasture, and with infinite difficulty succeeded in mounting. She proved unmanageable, and carried you off on a break-neck run, at the instant Whitey threw us!"

The talk, once started in this reminiscent vein, proved a fertile one. It was sparkling, piquant, amusing; and one story brought up another, and each was a little comedy full of the vivid life, the high spirits, the dash of adventure, the wild, joyous freedom of boyhood and girlhood.

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Jack and Grace had the talking for a long time to themselves, but at last Hester's turn came. The stories with which she supplemented the others had a light, gay touch, and a merry, contagious quality, which brought out peals and shouts of mirth — the women's soft laughter mingling with the man's deep bass. It was in accordance with Mrs. Wilmarth's plan that Grace should be brought to the front in all these stories — should move a fair, girlish figure among those roseate atmospheres — those bright, boyish memories.

But she did not say to herself what, nevertheless, she must have been conscious of — this acute, brilliant Hester Wilmarth — that if her brother's heart had been really stirred, there would have been no need of all this effort, of these graceful devices, and carefully arranged foregrounds. After a long while the talk branched off into later scenes and events. It was suprising, too, that they found so much to revivify here. During the last years Grace had been often abroad, and Jack had made the continental tour, partly with some classmates, partly with Mr. and Mrs. Wilmarth soon after their marriage. The young man and woman had frequently come upon each other in their foreign travels, among the Swiss mountains, in famous old-world picture galleries, amid Roman ruins, and palaces in the silent Alhambra and at the Louvre. Twice, indeed, the two American parties had joined, and sailed up the Rhine, and

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visited the Scotch Highlands in company. It was delightful to revive all these events in that summer morning at Red Ledge.

"It did seem as though there was some curious fate in it, — the way we were constantly running into each other," said Mrs. Wilmarth.

"It was certainly a happy fate for one man," subjoined Jack, and the glance he bent on Grace was not lost on either of the women.

Later in the day the ladies trifled with some work — gay-colored, silken meshes overflowing laps, and white, glancing fingers with pretty, feminine suggestiveness. Jack found some volumes of poetry on the table. He proposed reading aloud to the ladies. This was something rather out of his usual habit, though he had poetic feeling and a voice of fine quality.

"You shall have your own poets," he said. "Shall it be Browning, or Tennyson, or both?"

Hester wanted "A Dream of Fair Women." Grace asked for something of Browning's, but preferred that Jack should make his own selections. She secretly regarded Browning as a bore. She could make little of his metaphysics, his mysticism, and his ellipses. But it was the Boston fad, and she had joined a Browning Club.

Jack selected favorite poems and passages, and Miss Halifax commented effectively on these. Her remarks were for the most part plagiarisms. She

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had not heard clever people and geniune lovers of Browning talk for nothing. She had a feminine gift too, at bright, picturesque expression, but small feeling for poetry. That, however, mattered little, when her youth and beauty were a poem in themselves.

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XI

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN'S MISTAKE

In the gloaming of that long summer day the three people were out again on the piazzas. These were sure to be crowded at this time. All the ladies were in their evening toilets. There was much flashing of diamonds, gleaming of pearls, among the gorgeous dresses. Mrs. Wilmarth and Grace wore their jewels sparingly, and amid the pronounced colors the two ladies were rather conspicuous for the simplicity and delicate shades of their costumes. But each had exquisite taste, and no toilets were more attractive. By this time the moon was coming over the hills with all that slow state which became her Sovereignty of the heavens. The stars had begun to twinkle faintly in the sky spaces.

Mr. Wilmarth was expected on the evening train. His wife proposed they should meet him at the station. This was a mile away, at the foot of the hill.

The walk would have a touch of freedom and adventure about it. It could not fail to suggest memories in the line of those on which the young people had dwelt that day.

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The ladies were ready in a few moments. How lovely Grace looked with that silken, gauzy thing — a faint flush among the white — wound about her head! It seemed as though a summer cloud, just touched with the sunset, had settled on that gold hair.

The road, along which they moved slowly, wound down by an easy grade to the station, between trimmed hedges and blooming bushes. As the moon rose higher, the silver lights began to touch all the common, homely things, and transmute them into something rich and strange.

"What a glorious night it will be!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilmarth, loosening the scarf about her head. Its pale gold sheen suited her hair and eyes admirably. "It seems as though we three had gone back to the boy-and-girl days, and started out on one of our old larks."

Grace did not reply; but she turned to Jack with a glance and smile which at that moment had perhaps in them more of the woman than of the coquette.

At the look a new thought flashed across Jack Elderby. Why should he not avail himself of this evening to carry out the purpose he had formed that morning? The night was made for romance and poetry, for lovers and betrothals.

In a few moments they came to a little footpath which, diverging from the road, climbed up among the terraces and coppices, with all sorts of sinuous

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windings, to the summit of the hill. It would be full of poetic mystery and charm an hour later, when all the greenery and dusky shadows were fretted and enmeshed with moonshine. The walk was a secluded one. In an instant the young man's mind was made up. On their return, he would suggest to Grace that they should take this path. When they emerged at the summit, it would not be Jack Elderby's fault if Grace Halifax were not his promised wife.

"How glad Hester will be!" the young man said to himself.

They reached the station — a vari-colored little affair in reds and yellows — to learn that the train would be an hour late that night. Interiors were not attractive with such a night outside. Up the road, less than a quarter of a mile, was a small pond, set like a blue bowl amid the savin-woods. The young people strolled down to this spot. A small row-boat was anchored close to the shore. Jack shouted like a boy when he caught sight of the thing.

"That delayed train was our good fate!" he exclaimed. "We can have half an hour's row. Here are the oars! — Grace — Hester, don't demur, but step in!"

And the women did, with laughter and jests, as they had done so often before when they were off on some frolic of which Jack was the leader.

A few of his muscular strokes sent the little fairy

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craft into the middle of the pond. Young cedars grew thick on the shore, and all their glooming shadows were fretted with silver. Grace Halifax sat in the boat with her profile cut like some rare cameo, against that white, pink-flushed stuff about her head. She looked beautiful enough to be a goddess. As Jack Elderby gazed, all indecisions and semi-conscious efforts to work his emotions up to the right pitch, disappeared. He did not doubt he was in love with Grace Halifax.

The mirth with which they had entered the boat subsided. The ineffable beauty and fascination stole like a spell over each. A few moments' silence was broken only by the sound of the oars.

"Hester," said Grace softly, "I believe it is all an illusion!"

"What, dear?"

"That we three are all grown up. You are not, for instance, a young matron, but a slip of a girl: I am just on the edge of my teens, and Jack here is only a little way in his: we are off together on one of our old larks. Why did we ever play at being big people? It is so tiresome!"

This speech was not in Grace Halifax's usual vein, but Hester humored it.

"Yes; the big game is tiresome. But we will all of us be youngsters once more, at least until the train gets in! Jack, tell us a story! You always did that when we were off together like this."

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"I thought you had stories enough to-day at my expense!"

"But we want one of an entirely different kind now," resumed the vivacious lady. "Something in a serious vein — all the better if it is something you have seen and heard, and that will touch or thrill us. Am I not right, Grace?"

"Perfectly, Hester."

In a flash, the scene which he had witnessed two days before at Old Lanes came up to Jack Elderby. Later events had driven it out of his mind.

They had crossed the pond now, which was less than a quarter of a mile wide, and were slowly pulling along in the shadow of the cedars.

"If that is what you particularly want," replied Jack, "I will relate a little incident which I saw two days ago, and which struck me as a bit of pure heroism, though the actor was one of the most ridiculous little tatterdemalions I ever set eyes on."

Then he related the scene which he had witnessed in the old tavern portico. He brought the whole before his hearers with his picturesque, virile concretes. There was the hot afternoon, with the long, yellow highway, the slender, unconscious woman in gray, moving across the road, the frantic beasts close upon her, the small, ragged, barefoot figure darting upon the scene. All the lights and shadows, the life and movement, of the brief drama, were set sharply before the two women.

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For some occult reason the speaker's feeling had not infected Grace Halifax. Her tone was singularly unresponsive, and had a hard, disdainful inflection as she said, —

"That young woman must have been a very vacuous person not to have her wits about her when she plunged straight across the path of those tearing beasts. Such a daft condition! I never have any patience with that sort of people."

It was a false note. Perhaps Hester perceived it, for she replied, "Yes; it is very unfortunate to be absent-minded on occasions like that. But there *was* something heroic in the way that little gamin sprang forward to save her, taking his life in his hand."

"Oh, I don't dispute that!" This time the little hard, disdainful note was more accented in the voice.

"Certainly it was most lucky for the daft young woman that he was at hand. But think of anybody with the feelings of a lady being indebted to a creature — vociferous, maladorous, probably bibulous — for her life! Of course she would be compelled to acknowledge the service, take his grimed paw in her hand, and thank him! Even money would hardly meet the requirements of such an occasion. Let us bless the gods that we are not absent-minded!"

This time Hester felt the false note decidedly.

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She came to the rescue with an amused laugh and a little rallying. "O Grace, you always were such a thorough-going aristocrat!"

At that moment they heard among the hills the shriek of the engine.

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XII

A LITTLE FOOTPATH AND A CRITICAL MOMENT

THERE was a crowd of people at the station that night. Guests from the hotel came down in force to greet the new arrivals.

Among these was a rather conspicuous figure, — a slightly bald, large-featured, strongly built man, with a mild suggestion of pompousness, an air of energy and conscious prosperity. He was evidently a broker or capitalist of some sort, and accustomed to dealing a good deal with inferiors. A philanthropist would have noticed that he had kindly eyes and a good-humored expression.

Hester Wilmarth's husband was somewhat past middle age, though his thinning hair and well-trimmed beard had not yet gathered their first frost. His brother-in-law regarded Dick as a well-meaning fellow, with a considerable leaven of self-conceit and a decided tendency to make the Ego salient in his talk. He wondered sometimes how so brilliant a girl as Hester Wilmarth certainly was should have contented herself with that sort of man.

But a man's brothers-in-law are apt to indulge in

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that kind of reflection when it comes to the marital choice of a favorite sister.

The real explanation was one which Hester would hardly have admitted to herself. But it was none the less true. She had social ambitions which required wealth for their indulgence. Dick Wilmarth had partly inherited, partly amassed for himself, a large fortune.

The gentleman came forward with his usual bustling air to greet his wife as she entered the station with her brother and Miss Halifax.

"Well, Dick, what news from Boston?" inquired Jack, as soon as the first greetings were interchanged.

"It has been simply a brick-and-stone oven for the last twenty-four hours. You may thank the Fates, my dear fellow, that they have kept you up here at Red Ledge, instead of down there on the coast with the mercury close to a hundred."

"Whew! Couldn't Boston get up her east wind?"

"Not a whiff, sir! What wind there was seemed like a sirocco off miles of burning desert. My soul! But this is good!" as they came out of the station into the coolness and freshness of the night.

In a few minutes the little party had started for the hotel. Groups of people chattered and laughed gayly about them. Mr. and Mrs. Wilmarth greeted acquaintances and interchanged the light talk of the hour.

Jack and Miss Halifax had dropped a little behind.

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They kept up an animated talk, although there was a tendency to occasional silences. Neither had alluded to the story which Jack had related in the boat, and which had been summarily disposed of by the sound of the incoming train. It is doubtful whether Miss Halifax had thought of the matter again.

The feeling which she had shown on that occasion was unusual, for she was tactful, and not ill-natured. It seemed incredible that she could have felt a sudden pique over the description of that slender, gray-draped, unknown young woman — she, Grace Halifax, with her beauty which inthralled the souls and the senses of men! She, herself, probably had no idea of the hard, icy tone, of the contemptuous manner, which had accented her speech.

It had been to Jack Elderby the one discord of that perfect day. It had wounded his feelings; it had jarred his tastes; it had flawed the ideal Grace of that moonlit hour.

All this seemed a kind of disloyalty to the lovely woman walking at his side. Jack resented it for her sake. He tried to forget her speech with the tone and manner which perfectly suited its spirit. He sought to revive the feeling with which he had regarded her that day.

But he did not succeed. Painful thoughts, questionings, arose in his mind. How entirely she had misapprehended the spirit of the whole scene! How

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she had vulgarized, caricatured, with a few words, the peril of the woman, the heroism of the boy! He knew how coarse and heartless he should have regarded all this in another.

Jack could have cursed himself for the ugly adjectives, and, in a sudden access of remorse, his tone had a tenderness which could not fail to strike Grace. The spell of the night — the world about them drowned in that white sea of moonlight — the presence at her side of the man for whom she cared most on earth, all had their influence on her mood. When Jack spoke to her the sapphire eyes flashed up sweeter answers than her lips uttered. His old feeling was stirred for a moment. If he could only forget! Was not the best way to do that — the only way indeed to make amends for all disloyalty of thought, or feeling — to propose at once?

As Jack asked himself this question, they approached the little footpath which branched from the road about midway of the slope. This was the point where he had intended to turn off. If he suggested that they should enter the path, he knew what must follow. He grew silent. The air seemed rife with a sense of impending destiny. Did Grace feel it too?

In the wide, shining stillness she ceased to talk.

In a moment more they reached the footpath. Jack had almost opened his lips to propose the divergence, when some instinct that he should not be

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equal to the occasion, restrained him. Another day — to-morrow perhaps — the old feeling would return, and he would ask Grace Halifax to be his wife, as a man only has a right to ask a woman.

They moved slowly by the path. On those few seconds the destinies of two people had hung. But in days to come Jack Elderby could never look back upon that night — upon the moonshine all about, upon the little footpath twisting away, a soft gloom, threaded with silver, and see on what a slight thing all his future had hung, without a feeling — of which it is enough to say that the strongest and most persistent element was an unutterable thankfulness.

"Dick," said Mrs. Wilmarth suddenly, "I wish you would just look back — I can't turn without disturbing this head-gear — and see if Jack and Grace are behind us."

Mr. Wilmarth could not possibly suspect the feeling which was at the bottom of his wife's request. All her wits, however, were alert to-night. It was her secret belief that Jack's heart had been touched to-day as no woman had ever touched it. She knew his impetuous temper. The moonlight among the woods and terraces and winding ways of Red Ledge, the scene, the hour, full of mystery and charm and romance, were precisely adapted to draw on a lover to an avowal, especially if he were Jack Elderby.

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Her interest all on the *qui vive*, Mrs. Wilmarth had noticed the little footpath as they passed it. Its availability for a romantic little episode struck her at once.

At his wife's request, Mr. Wilmarth obligingly turned his head.

"Yes; they are a few rods behind," he replied. "Shall I call them?"

"Of course not." The lady's tones were slightly irritated. "Sometimes I think my brother, Jack Elderby, is the most" — She stopped there. Hester Wilmarth always knew when to stop.

"Well, what?" asked her husband.

"Dick, I do believe you men are the most insensate creatures!"

"Perhaps so." There was a touch of offended dignity in the man's tones now. "But will you tell me of anything more unaccountable than a woman's caprice? I can't possibly see, my dear, what those two young people's being behind us should have to do with your displeasure, which somehow appears aimed at myself!"

Dick Wilmarth was very fond of his wife, thought her a wonderfully clever and charming woman; but he had a sense of what was due to himself, even from such a wife!

Mrs. Wilmarth showed her exquisite tact now. She did not think it wise to confide the cause of her ill-humor to her husband; but she said, clinging a

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little closer to his arm, and in a half affectionate, half bantering tone, —

"Dick, dear, we haven't seen each other for four days. Don't let us begin with a tiff! Haven't you learned before this time that a woman's talk may mean anything or nothing?"

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XIII

NEXT DAY

THE next day Jack Elderby had a novel experience. Had the "blue devils" made a swoop on him, he wondered? With his splendid health, his virile temperament, his life crowded with the manifold interests and activities of young manhood, existence had been to him a very pleasant affair. He thought it a kind of affected pessimism in people — at least the fortunate ones — to wonder whether life were worth living. He, for his part, never had any serious questionings on that subject.

But this morning the young man awoke with a sense that things in general were stale, flat, and unprofitable. He felt depressed, cynical, out of tune. When he thought of the night before, he wondered if he had not acted like a fool in failing to seize his chance and settle matters with Grace Halifax! Were the Fates revenging her in this fashion?

It was impossible that the reaction from yesterday's mood should not have its effect on young Elderby. He had felt for Grace Halifax something

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which he had for no other woman. This does not mean, of course, that his interest had never been aroused before, but it had been of too slight a nature to stir his imagination or his heart for more than a moment.

His ideals of woman, with his own genuineness of character, had kept him from all compromising flirtations, much more from all coarse or harmful relations with the sex. It is enough to say that Jack Elderby, nearing his thirtieth birthday, had no unsavory memories to haunt his conscience.

While Grace's beauty and her woman's fascinations had, as we have seen, wrought their spell on her former playmate, other influences had worked in her favor. Jack was hardly conscious of these, and, in any case, would not have been disposed to give them their full weight. The most powerful of these were old memories and associations. Another was the conviction that Hester's heart was much set on this marriage.

But the fortune which was so important in her regard really weighed light in the scale with her brother. Indeed, Hester had shown her good-sense by not alluding to this matter. It was only for Grace's sake that Jack had thought of her fortune. Brought up amid wealth and luxury as she had been, he reasoned, how could he have asked her to become his wife with no income beyond that his profession afforded?

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"Of course I can rub through on it well enough," he had said to himself with a setting of the jaw which brought out its strong lines, "and, for myself, I don't pine for a dollar in the Pater's coffers; but if he takes me for his son-in-law, and it comes to a settlement of matters between us — well, I intend to satisfy Halifax *Père* that I am not marrying his daughter for her money!"

The party, augmented to four by Mr. Wilmarth's arrival, met at breakfast. The usual bright raillery and chaffing ran about the table. Indeed, Jack rather outdid himself in this line, because of some underlying mood that seemed to mock all his gayety. Grace was very lovely in her morning toilet; but Jack had no opportunity for a private talk: otherwise he might have sent all romance whistling down the winds, and offered himself in the garish daylight — the more fervently, perhaps, because he wanted to put away a memory, a look, a tone, and a few cold, disdainful words that it was difficult to dissociate with that beautiful profile cut against the moonlight.

The morning train brought an access of company, friends of Miss Halifax on their way to the sea. They had stopped for a day or two at Red Ledge. Jack rather resented their appearance. Their talk — or was the fault in himself? — seemed to him insufferable banality.

After dinner he made up his mind for a ride. He

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set off on Hercules, and had a brisk canter which lasted nearly two hours. The day was lovely as yesterday, but light winds cooled the heat, and masses of white cumuli heaped themselves about the horizon. At last Jack drew rein and looked about him: he found himself on a strange road, a rugged old highway in an ancient wood, among whose cedars and pines the summer winds loitered and sang. As he listened, he heard another sound, farther away, and on his left, low, sustained, like a rumbling thunder. After a few moments of intent listening he interpreted this. It was the sound of falling water.

Jack perceived he must be in the vicinity of Moose Falls. People at Red Ledge who had an eye for scenery and explored the vicinity were enraptured with the wild loveliness of the Falls.

On the instant young Elderby dismounted. He secured Hercules, by this time well raced, to a young oak, and set out in the direction of that low, deep-volumed monotone.

A quarter of an hour's walk amid the fragrant, shadowy stillness of trees and underbrush, brought the young man to the edge of a steep, rugged slope. The monotone had by this time risen into a tumult of leaping, shouting waters.

Jack plunged down the slope. It was roughened with huge, twisting tree-roots, with big, lichen-stained bowlders, with thickets, wild-flowering bushes, and

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tangles of greenery; and all the soft brown gloom was relieved by flakes and patches of golden light.

Near the foot of the bank, Jack came suddenly into an opening, which afforded him his first view of Moose Falls. The water-way, a mile long, between densely wooded banks, stretched before him.

It was a vista made up of an infinite beauty of form, color, movement. Moose River, flowing so tranquilly along its upper levels, had here to descend a rocky, granite bed, broken into shallow terraces, and broad, irregular staircases, and polished mottled pavements.

Great bowlders raised their massive shoulders, stretched their huge lengths like rudely sculptured Titans along the channel through which poured the flood of bright, singing waters. These broke into all sorts of shifting, tossing forms, when they leaped over the terraces in glittering cascades, when they trailed their dazzling draperies over the rough-hewn, rocky staircases, or swept in great silvery folds and shining gauzes over the long granite levels.

One found such infinite variety in the water-work of that mile of Moose Falls! The spray would be tossed, a glittering scarf, over some gray bowlder. A rock, brown, jagged, bare, would burst suddenly into a great white flowering, as the waters flashed and tumbled over it. A swift current, caught among the ragged stones, would be torn into dazzling fringes, and frayed into shining gossamer threads.

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Jack Elderby stood some time, rapt in his first impressions of the wild loveliness and grandeur of the scene. After a while he began his explorations, moving slowly from point to point down the river-bed, leaping the small side streams, and climbing the big bowlders. All this was not a difficult feat to his well-trained muscles and agile strength, especially at this season, when the water was low. His gaze feasted itself, too, on the whole framing of the Falls, the wild, lush greenery of trees and vines and tangled undergrowth against the gray and brown of the rocks and the white waters.

The banks, too, opened cool, dim nooks and recesses where one could sit and enjoy at leisure the varied pictures of this mile-long, rock-hewn gallery. Some of these nooks were like dainty little rooms, whose ceilings were the lofty pines or the low-bending cedars, whose floors were spread with vines and mosses, while bushes and ferns stretched green tapestries around.

At last Jack penetrated into one of the loveliest of these nooks. It was under the shade of an immense pine, opposite the central and most beautiful of the three cascades.

The young man had a few minutes to himself, watching the swift fall of the water as it combed over the deep terrace in glittering silver masses, about which a world of iris colors flickered and danced. But in the midst of his devouring gaze the young

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man suddenly became conscious of something moving with a light, swift tread, like that of a wild animal, between him and the water.

An instant later the figure came into the full light. He recognized it at once. There it was — just as he had seen it dart into the road at one critical moment — the rimless hat, the scant, ragged clothes, the bare, soiled feet, — as perfect a picture of the lowest sort of street gamin as ever caught the eye of an artist.

The young man looked at the boy intently. He wondered if he had acted that day on a blind impulse, or on something deeper and nobler. Jack had had a vague purpose of hunting him up and rewarding him. What a picture he made now — every tatter thrown out sharply against that gray background of rocks, as he gazed up and down the river-bed with a curious intentness as though he were expecting somebody!

The man was on the point of stepping out and accosting the boy, when there was a light movement among the underbrush, and from a little footpath which wandered down the bank to this favorite point of view, a swift figure emerged. Jack recognized it in an instant: it was that of the young woman in gray.

"O Donil, I am glad to find you!" said a voice that seemed to chord with the soft voices of the cascade. "Were you looking for me?"

The speaker drew close to the boy. Her face was

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turned from young Elderby; but he could see the figure perfectly: its slender height, its attitude of interest, the soft gray draperies, the deep-rimmed shade hat, scarfed round with a corresponding shade. He was struck, too, with the carriage of the head, the line of the shoulders, the air of still graciousness.

Donil looked up at the lady. A ray of sunlight crossed his face and revealed the thin, starved cheeks, the high-bridged, disproportioned nose.

"I was lookin' round for you," he said; and if the grammar faltered, the tones had an honest ring. "I come here twicet before, but I couldn't seed you."

"No; those horses gave me a shock I could not get over at once. And yesterday the heat was too great for a long walk."

"Do you come such a long ways?" asked the boy curiously.

"It might not seem so to you. But it is more than two miles from — from where I live."

Jack Elderby, standing where he could hear every syllable in the brown gloom of the pines, marked the sudden pause, and divined the second thought which had closed the sentence with four monosyllables instead of the one which would have meant so much more.

"But I have thought of you a great deal," continued the voice after an instant's pause, "thought of the little boy who rushed so bravely into the road to save my life!"

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"It had to be did lively. If I'd stopped to think twicet with them horses a-gallopin' an' tearin' on, it would 'a' been all over with you!"

"I am certain it would. But I know a good many boys far away from here, and I like some of them very much; I think they are fond of me. But I am not in the least sure any of those boys would have had the pluck and nerve to do what you did that day, my little Donil!"

At these last words he stared at the lady in a dumb surprise. It was evident nobody had ever called him this before.

"It don't seem like such a big thing — jest that — anyhow," he blurted out at last.

"But you must think what it would seem if you had been in my place, and if some one whom you had never seen had sprung forward to save your life, and risked his own. I think it would not appear such a little thing to you then."

The ragged head went down. The toes wriggled among the stones. It was difficult to tell whether toes or stones were browner. Then the boy looked up suddenly.

"But there ain't nobody in the world would lick out in that way for me."

The pathos was in the words, not in the boy's tone or look. To him all this was a matter of course.

There was a moment's silence. What a soft, happy choral that gliding water made!

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"Let us sit down on this bench of rock," said the lady. "I always come here when I visit the Falls. I like to listen to them, you see, and watch the lights and the colors twinkling on the waters. But to-day it is *you* I want to see and hear, Donil. I want to ask you questions."

She seated herself on the rock, which had been rounded and polished by the water when the river was high, into a rude, irregular-shaped bench.

Donil obeyed the gesture of the lady, and took a seat by her side. His face had a kind of owl-like gravity. You could not imagine it had ever worn a smile. It was that strange, unnatural gravity which comes early to the faces of children who are born and nurtured in poverty, hardship, and misery.

"How does that man 'Bijah Hearn, — I think you said was his name, — with whom you live, treat you? Is he kind?"

"He ain't never kind to nothin'; but he ain't rampin' ugly, 'cept when he's drunk."

"And is that often?"

"It depends on how he gits the tin. Ginerally oncet or twicet a week."

"How dreadful! What does he do then?"

"Al'ays gives me a lickin' if he gits a chance. Then he pounds a feller black and blue, and makes him see stars."

"Oh, you poor boy!"

"'Tain't so bad now as when I was a younker: I

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keep on the lookout, and skedaddle soon's I hear him comin' round, hollerin' and swearin'. When he's sober, he's only cross and contradictin'. It's the whiskey sets him off."

"And you have to live with a man like that!"

"I ain't got no other," said Donil Kemp quietly.

"But I want to learn something more. How did you fall into his hands?"

"I was a little shaver, *Miss* Hearn telled me oncet, and my father brought me to the same house, and took a room where they was livin'. That was in New York ever so long ago! My father said my mother died when I was jest a baby. He was awful sick himself at that time. In a little while he died; *Miss* Hearn was with him then. He begged her to take care of me, co's he'd had troubles, and there wasn't any kith and kin to send me to. He left all his things with her and some money that was over what would bury him. *Miss* Hearn said it wasn't very much, and anyhow was gone long ago. Sometimes it 'pears I can remember my father, — a pale man with a beard all streaked with white, and then it all gets muddled like a dream."

"But you say that this happened in New York. How, then, did you get to Old Lanes?"

"'Bijah came off sudden with *Miss* Hearn and the boys, when I was six. He wanted to leave me ahint, but she wouldn't hear on't. They was a good deal better off then, but he fell into bad company and got

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a-drinkin'. He did somethin' that made him vamose in a jiffy. He came to Old Lanes co's somebody who knowed what he'd done, told him about the place, and the old house where nobody was livin' nigh Berry Plains. 'Bijah mutters about it all now when he's on a spree, but he's close-mouthed when he's sober."

"Mrs. Hearn seems to have been your friend, Donil!"

"Yes." But the tone made a rather qualified affirmative.

"She's wore out with 'Bijah's sprees, and she gets mad, and scolds at times till all's blue, and cuffs a feller's ears. She's chirkiest when she gets into a corner and smokes a pipe. But she al'ays saves me from a beatin' if she can, when 'Bijah's on a drunk. She's hid me a many times, when he was a-tearin' round like a wild critter."

A few more questions elicited the further information that the Hearn household consisted now of four members. Donil was the youngest of these. The eldest boy, named after his father, and a "chip of the old block" his mother averred, had run off and gone to sea. Matt, about two years Donil's senior, was evidently the latter's favorite, though he had "a high old temper." The boys sometimes gathered berries and nuts in the woods. His father called Matt a "lazy dog," because he liked to lie curled up by the fireside.

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He struck Marjorie as presenting the least hopeless aspect of the masculine Hearn breed.

She gathered, too, though Donil did not say this, that he was really the main dependence of the family. He fished in the streams, he picked berries and peddled them, and did odd jobs for the farmers, while the youngest scion of the stock was much given to loafing about the streets. 'Bijah's scant earnings and borrowings were devoted to whiskey. His wife did laundry-work when she had an opportunity.

The truthfulness of Donil's story shone through his homely vernacular. Throughout there was no attempt to make a point for himself. But what a story it was of sordid poverty, ignorance, and sin! The pitifulness of it filled Marjorie's heart. She longed to take Donil off with her, to see how he would look when he had shed those beggarly garments, had a thorough bath, the ragged hair carefully dressed, and the small, wiry frame indued in clothes, fresh and becoming.

Then she would like to crown the whole by setting him down before a neatly served, abundant table. What a feast of the gods it would be to the half-famished little gamin!

But Marjorie perceived at once the impossibility of carrying out her wishes amid her present surroundings. Donil's homelessness forced her own upon her in a way nothing had ever done before.

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She laid her hand on his shoulder. He looked up at her a good deal surprised and curious. She smiled at him, but the tears were in her eyes.

"My poor boy!" The soft voice was not quite steady. "I am so sorry for you."

He thought she must be alluding to 'Bijah's beating, quite oblivious of all else there was in his lot to deplore.

"I don't mind 'em much now," he said in a tone that was evidently intended to reassure her. "Blows hurt wust when a fellow's a little kid, you know. He gits toughened when he's older. 'Bijah don't have a chance often nowadays. When I see what's comin', I've learned how to duck under his arm, and make tracks, double-quick!" and he chuckled.

All this time the figure standing motionless behind the great pine bole, had watched the group just below him, and taken in the whole effect of the surroundings, — the rude granite bench, the lavish undergrowth, the white cascade, flashing here and there into tints of the loveliest amber and sea-green.

Young Elderby had marked the unconscious grace and refinement of every pose of the young lady, — a refinement so native that the very lines of her draperies seemed to share it, while all her grace and daintiness were brought into sharper relief by that ragged, unkempt figure at her side.

It was impossible that Jack Elderby, standing where he did, should not overhear every syllable

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which passed between the two. When he at last awoke to the fact that he was listening to a private conversation, his first instinct, being a man of honor, was to withdraw. But it was impossible to do this without betraying his proximity. That would startle and annoy the lady. Explanations would be awkward. Besides, there was nothing secret in Donil's story — nothing which anybody might not know. Young Elderby had a feeling that the scene which he had witnessed from the tavern, and the interest which it had aroused in him, gave him a certain right to learn what the boy had to say for himself. With some lingering dubiousness as to the propriety of his position, he yet thought it wisest to remain.

Of course he might have stopped his ears; but, really, that never occurred to Jack Elderby.

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XIV

AN AFTERNOON AT MOOSE FALLS

In the silence which followed Donil's last reply, Marjorie had an oppressive sense of her own limitations. When it came to a question of bettering his lot, her way seemed hedged up for the present. Open relations with him would be almost certain to involve her with the Hearns. These people were dangerously near, if they did not belong to, the criminal class. She could not jeopardize the comfort or safety of the household at Cameron Brae, even for Donil's sake. Should the Hearns once feel they had a hold, through the boy, on any member of the "great family," they might attempt to make the most of it. It was her duty, for Mrs. Cameron's sake, to avoid any complications of this sort.

But her purpose to serve Donil, to be a new and helpful influence to the boy, was not lessened. He had not saved her life, so he should find, without brightening his own. She would yet move heaven and earth to help him; only it was plain she could accomplish little in the matter she had so much at heart while she remained at Old Lanes. Marjorie

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looked at Donil, sitting before her with only the dimmest sense of all the wrong and wretchedness of his young life — never seeming to contrast it resentfully with the lives of other, happier children. How could God let such things be! And this poor, starved, beaten waif was his child too!

This thought must have prompted her next question.

"Donil, there is something else I want to ask you. Has anybody ever told you — have you ever heard about God?"

"Oh, yes!" with a rather jaunty air, "I'm sure to hear about *Him* when 'Bijah's on a drunk and takes it out in swearin'."

"Is that all you ever heard — all you know about Him?"

"That's all, least mostwise." Then, with a little, decided jerk of the ragged head, "But I jest have my own thoughts about Him."

"Won't you tell me what they are?"

"I think he's jest a big, powerful big, old Injun."

A little shocked cry broke from Marjorie. Donil stared at her with his solemn, childish eyes.

"Oh, I ain't much afeared of Him!" he said reassuringly. "Matt says there's no gettin' ahead of Him. He can do whatever He sets about, and knows a heap more than all other folks put together. Sometimes when it's quiet like, and growin' dark, I look round; but I ain't never seed nothin'. If I did, I should

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make myself sca'ce. There's a place in the mullein pastur', hid a-tween two rocks and the blackberry vines. If I once got in there, he'd have a time of it findin' me."

Marjorie was silent while the water swept singing and shining past her. How was she to penetrate the dense ignorance which not only enveloped this boy's soul, but oppressed her own like a nightmare? But she must try. All ordinary methods failed in so anomalous a case. She said the thing which came first, not knowing to what it would lead.

"Donil, do you know what a lie is?"

"In course I know that."

"Tell me, then."

Donil's head went down again. A little skein of blue, sparkling water had got tangled among stones and roots close to the bank. Donil's toes worked and plashed vigorously in the runlet. After a somewhat lengthy mental process, he lifted his head, and spoke slowly like a boy who is feeling his way along a new lesson.

"It's when folks say things 'tain't when they 'tis, and things 'tis when they 'tain't."

"Yes. I see you understand perfectly. Now look me in the face, Donil."

The light, solemn eyes stared into the luminous, dark ones.

"They lied to you."

"Who did?"

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"Anybody who made you believe that dreadful thing you said just now about God."

"Nobody never told me that — jest — only I thought it for sure — I did."

"But you must believe me now. There is not one word of it true."

Again the head went down and the toes worked in the tangled runlet.

"Did you ever seed Him?" asked Donil, jerking his head up suddenly.

"No."

"Did you ever heered Him?"

"No."

"But you speak as if you knowed — sure!"

"I do know," all the doubts and questionings vanishing like morning mists. "I know that He is your great, tender, loving Father, that no dark can hide you from his eyes, that nobody can feel for you, can understand and be sorry for you — his poor little wronged orphan boy — like God!"

Donil drank it all in with his still, grave face, on which there was not one flicker of emotion.

"Where does He live?"

"He does not need a place, a house, as we do. All the world is his, and the blue sky and the sun and stars, and the day and night, and He made them all."

Again there was silence. The restless, jerky, little body was still, all except the fingers, which twisted themselves with worm-like convolutions in and

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out of each other. Marjorie wondered what was going on in the boy's brain and heart.

At last Donil looked up again. "If He's so grand and powerful and got all them things, and cares for me so much, why ain't He never done a thing for me?"

It was the question which Marjorie's soul had been asking a few minutes before. But now the answer which had baffled her came swift as words come from the heart.

"But He *has* done a great deal for you, Donil. He has made the beautiful world you live in, made it for you as well as for me. He has made all the things you love, too, — the grass and the flowers, the trees and the waters, leaping and singing about us at this moment. He did it that you might have a beautiful home, in which to live, to run about and be happy in. All the things which make you glad, all you love best, enjoy most, are His gift to you."

This time Donil sat very still, even to his fingers and toes. At last Marjorie said, —

"You are glad to know all this, Donil?"

"I reckon so; only a feller can't take it all in at oncet. It's all fired curi's!"

Before Marjorie could reply to this, the boy turned to her again.

"You said God seed and heered things?"

"All things, Donil!"

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"Do you s'pose now He can hear what we're a-sayin' this blessed minute?"

"Yes."

"If anybody should call then, do you think He'd hear that?"

"If He is our great, good Father, yours and mine, Donil, would He not be sure to hear whenever we needed Him, and called to Him?"

"But did you ever do that?"

"When I was in a great grief — the greatest of my life — I called to Him. It seemed to me I must die if He did not hear and help. I believe He did!"

"And if I should call too, you think He'd hear — ra'ly now?"

"Yes, Donil."

"I shouldn't know how to do it, though I might try, if" —

"Well?"

"I might try it sometime, if you'd show a feller how to do it first!"

Poor Marjorie! It was a hard moment. The hot color flashed into her cheeks: she had never dared to think of herself as a religious woman. Indeed, there had been times, whole days, when she had doubted, in the first anguish of her loss, whether there could be any God! That was when her father died.

Afterward the old hope and trust in the infinite love and care for her life, for all lives, had come back to her.

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And now this boy, this poor little pagan, without whom it was scarcely possible she could have been sitting here amid this beautiful idyl of nature, had asked her to show him how he should speak to God, the God of whom he had heard the first time from her lips! But how could she! Something shrank, almost shivered, in her. If she were only a better woman!

Then, in a moment, she forgot all about herself; she thought only of Donil, and of the groping mind and heart which had shaped his question.

Marjorie drew close to Donil. She took his brown, grimed hand in her soft, ungloved palm, —

"O Father, whom we call God, Thou knowest what the little boy sitting by me has asked — that I will show him how to speak to Thee, so that another time he may take heart, and speak for himself. Thou knowest he has had no mother, this little Donil, whose hand I hold, to gather him into her arms at night, and say over him the prayer I am trying to say now.

"And so he has not known, out in the cold and rough places, like the little lost lamb in the wilderness, that he was dearer to Thee for all the loneliness and hardship and trouble, dearer than those other boys he must often have thought of and envied, with their fathers and mothers, and warm, happy, sheltered homes.

"But now, may he learn what it is to have the

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best of all, the Father in Heaven, learn that to Him the way is always open, from Him the welcome always sure.

"May he feel that he may tell Thee anything, ask anything of Thee, and when things seem hardest and cruellest, and more than he can bear, may he bring them to Thee, sure that Thou wilt understand and pity and help.

"And because Thou didst put it in his heart to be brave and swift when the danger was close upon me, because he did not think of his own life when there was another's to save, he has heard of Thee for the first time, through me; and his heart is full of a great surprise and wonder, and the things I have tried to tell him seem too grand and beautiful to be true. But may he learn more and more what Thou art, try more and more to please Thee.

"May he be sure that Thou hast only good in Thy thoughts for him, that Thou meanest he shall yet be content and happy in ways that he cannot dream of now, and that Thou wilt make up to him for each pain and wrong and trouble, so that he shall not care for them, be sorry for them, any more, forever.

"May he be willing to wait, too, because Thou art waiting, knowing it shall be better for him in the end, and that he who has gone so long homeless in this Thy beautiful world, shall go to live in Thy far more beautiful home which we call Heaven."

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When Marjorie turned once more, and looked at Donil, she saw that a change had come over him. The face, solemn and impassive, as though it had been sculptured of stone, was quick and tremulous now with new feeling. The eyes shone with awe-struck wonder.

"Do you kind o' think He heered that for certin?" he asked in a low, earnest voice.

"Yes, Donil," and in that moment, at least, the speaker had no doubt; "I think He heard!"

Donil's eyes went all about, — on the green banks, the gray rocks, the white, flocking waters, — as though he half expected to see some new Presence there. Then his head went down, and Marjorie caught his low, amazed undertone.

"I s'num!"

During this time the figure in the shadow of the pine had hardly stirred, except when young Elderby removed his cap, and bent his head with the first words of Marjorie's prayer.

Half an hour later the three people had disappeared, and the green banks and gray rocks were having all that life and joy of waters to themselves. The afternoon was waning. A cool freshness, a golden haze, had begun to gather in the air.

The man left almost immediately after the others had disappeared. As he mounted Hercules he said to himself, —

"I would go around the world to see that woman's

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face!" Then before he drew rein he added, and his voice had the decision and almost the solemnity of one who is uttering a vow, —

"And I *will* see her."

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XV

THE YOUNG WOMAN IN GRAY

WHEN Jack Elderby made up his mind to any course of action, he had, as we have seen, the temperament which at once sets about carrying it out. It occurred to him as he rode away from Moose Falls that he had a partner at whist that morning, a shrewd, loquacious, elderly gentleman, with a bald occiput and gray whiskers, who had remarked that he once lived for several years at Old Lanes. The town, he added, was then an altogether different affair from the dead-and-alive old farming community into which it had now subsided.

In pursuance of the resolution he had made before he left Moose Falls, young Elderby resolved to cultivate the old gentleman's acquaintance.

That night there was a hop at Red Ledge hotel, — a brilliant affair with lights, music, flowers, the gay dresses, the soft voices and laughter of lovely women.

Miss Halifax's beauty shone resplendent amid the beautiful women in the ball-room. Of course, the prolonged waltzing and cotillons and the grand

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supper, were a part of the festival, which closed not far before the summer dawn.

Jack Elderby went through his part to everybody's satisfaction but his own. Indeed, the splendor and gayety formed a strong dissonance with his mood that night. What was there satisfying to mind or heart in that brilliant revel? The group under the pine-tree, the wide, fragrant banks, the bright, singing waters, and all the tenderness and pathos of the scene he had witnessed, could not be banished from his memory by all the gayety about him. The scene of the afternoon seemed to rebuke and belittle that of the evening. Even Grace Halifax's beauty, though it shone superb beside him in silken robes and dazzling jewels, missed something fine and sensitive — a fact of which he had never before been conscious. A slender, graceful figure in quiet colors and long, simple lines, would glide across his vision. A voice, low, sweet and tremulous with feeling, crept in and out of the hum of talk, the peals of laughter, the bursts of joyous music.

The next morning Jack Elderby had his chance. When the hour at whist was over it was not difficult to lead the talk in the direction of Old Lanes. The subject once started, proved agreeable and fertile to Jack's elderly companion. It appeared he had been a stockholder in the Cameron Iron Works.

"Those were the palmy days of Old Lanes, sir," he said as the two paced one of the side verandas of

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the hotel. "It makes a man sad to go back to the old place and see how it has run down in a couple of decades."

Once launched on this topic, reminiscence, bits of autobiography mixed up with agricultural statistics, and old political issues, flowed in a garrulous strain. Mr. Wortley had known Angus Cameron well, and had much to say about the former magnate of Old Lanes and of his wife, the beauty and belle of a quarter of a century before.

"Look at that place now, sir," he said: "House not to be matched in the country when it was built. The gay times, the grand dinners, the great balls, that roof has looked down on! And now Angus Cameron's widow has shut herself up there in solitude and illness — real or fancied. To-day that fine old place might as well be turned into a convent."

Jack proved a good listener during all this volubility, but he was watching his chance.

"Mrs. Angus Cameron!" he repeated half to himself, when there was a little pause. The name seemed to wake some dim echo in his memory.

"Heard of her, I dare say," replied Mr. Wortley, catching him up rapidly. "A magnificent woman, sir, about the time you must have been trying on your first pair of trousers."

The younger man laughed.

"I have not the faintest recollection of that event. No doubt it seemed interesting at the time; but I am

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curious about this Cameron Brae. When I ride over to Old Lanes again I must take a look at the place. A mile from the old tavern, you say?"

"Yes; it will repay your trouble. Follow the road on your left. The house stands on a hill — a noble site — and the grounds are still kept in admirable order, not for guests, certainly — for ghosts, I presume!" and the vivacious little man rubbed his hands and laughed at his jest.

But from the moment he heard the name of Cameron Brae, Jack had associated the strange lady with it. His next question had a motive beyond the idle curiosity which seemed to prompt it.

"Do you mean that the lady lives there in absolute solitude with her servants?"

"It amounts to that. Of course any arrival at the mansion, as it is called, makes a ripple of interest in that bucolic community. For instance, the postmaster confided to me, as though it were a startling *morceau*, that a young lady had come to stay a while at Cameron Brae."

"A town agape over one young woman's advent! That reminds me of California traditions; but this is Massachusetts. Were you fortunate enough to have a glimpse of her?"

"One of my old tenants pointed her out to me when we were taking a drive. She was moving swiftly along the road, and she had on a gray dress; that was about the sum of my observations."

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"Cameron Brae has the true Highland ring. It carries one back to the Scotch mists and heather," continued Jack, who had now gained the information for which he had devoted the last two hours to his garrulous companion.

"Yes; that was a fad of the old man's. A full-blooded Highlander, too! Keen as a brier! His Scotch shrewdness and thrift laid the foundation of the Cameron fortunes."

The talk was prolonged for a quarter of an hour, but its real interest had expired for Jack Elderby with those few sentences about the strange young woman at Cameron Brae.

The next time Jack and his sister were alone together he said to her, —

"Hester, did you ever hear of a Mrs. Angus Cameron?"

The lady laid down the novel she was reading.

"I don't recall the name," she said. "Why do you ask, Jack?"

He related what Mr. Wortley had told him that morning of the lady who was living in her elegant seclusion at Cameron Brae.

"The name," he concluded, "seemed to have a familiar sound to me. Perhaps I was mistaken, as neither of us seems able to associate it with any one."

Mrs. Wilmarth reflected again. "Ah, yes, I do remember now!" she exclaimed. "This Mrs. Cameron was an acquaintance of mamma's when they

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were girls. I have forgotten her maiden name. I think they must have been rather intimate at one time. Papa knew her too. I remember now mamma's once telling him with a laugh, that the only woman she was ever jealous of was Mrs. Angus Cameron. Curious, how those old things come up!"

"Yes; there are plenty of curious things in the world, if one only stops to think about them," Jack subjoined musingly. "Doesn't it strike you, Hester, as we are in Mrs. Cameron's neighborhood, and she is an old friend of our family, that it would be good form, or something better, to call — at least, leave our cards there?"

"Perhaps so." Hester's tone showed only a languid acquiescence. "But it is a long drive to Old Lanes. And then, what with one programme and another always on the carpet, I am just rushed through the days. A half-hour to myself is a luxury."

"Unhappy woman!"

"You can afford to be ironical! But what I said is none the less true. However, we can compromise this matter. Should you happen to be in the vicinity, and feel like it, leave my card and compliments with your own, at Cameron Brae. That's a dear fellow, Jack!"

Mrs. Wilmarth prided herself on being a keen reader of character, but she was to find one day that her instincts had, in the present case, been singularly at fault.

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XVI

A CALL AT CAMERON BRAE

ONE day a visitor's card was brought to Mrs. Cameron. Her morning toilet — always a late one — had just been completed. Marjorie had thought, as she had many times before, what a handsome woman she must have been! She reminded the young girl of some picture of a stately marquise, with the profusion of snowy hair framing the proud, delicate face.

Mrs. Cameron looked at the card.

"That must be Philip Elderby's son!" she said with some quite unusual animation. She gazed at the card, while the servant waited. After his dismissal she turned to Marjorie, saying, —

"Will you do me the favor, Miss Day, to see this young gentleman for me? I cannot quite trust a servant with my message."

"I shall be very glad to take it, Mrs. Cameron."

"I saw him once. But he was so young — hardly four years old, I think. It is not probable he will remember," continued the lady. "His father and mother were old friends. Will you tell him his call

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gives me much pleasure, and learn what his errand may be?"

Marjorie hazarded a suggestion that he would probably desire to see Mrs. Cameron.

The lady glanced with a kind of dubious pensiveness at her mirror. The sight touched Marjorie. How hard it must be for a woman whose beauty had been the pride and joy of her life, to grow old!

But the face was looking remarkably well this morning under the soft laces of its breakfast-cap.

"I — if he really desires it, I will make an exception for old times in his favor, and see him a short time."

Marjorie ran up-stairs to her room, much gratified with the permission she had secured. Some new presence and interest could not fail to do Mrs. Cameron good, she thought.

Then, being a woman, and dainty in all ways and habits, she glanced at her dressing-mirror, adjusted a rebellious ring of hair, shook out her draperies, the whole occupying less than two minutes. Then she descended the grand staircase to the parlor.

She entered the drawing-room, and a stranger, sitting near the door, rose and bowed.

"I am Miss Day," said Marjorie, and she and Jack Elderby looked at each other.

Marjorie was dressed precisely as she had been that morning when she came into the room at Briarsley to meet Dr. Amoury. The first thing that

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struck young Elderby was that mesh of bronze hair with all those amber lights among the rings. He saw beneath them the great eyes out of which looked the beautiful soul; he saw the flicker of color — a faint wild rose tint in her cheek, and the face was to Jack Elderby like that of no woman's face he had ever seen.

Marjorie saw at once, even before he spoke, that the stranger before her was a gentleman in all the conventional meanings of that much-wronged word.

Jack introduced himself, and the two sat down, and he went on to explain briefly that he and his sister were stopping at Red Ledge, and that he had, on learning of Mrs. Cameron's vicinity, resolved to call on his parents' friend. "Would Mrs. Cameron permit him to see her?" he asked.

Marjorie delivered the lady's cordial messages, and a little talk followed regarding Mrs. Cameron's health and habits. Marjorie's replies indicated how exceptional was the favor she had shown young Elderby in receiving him.

A few minutes later the young people entered Mrs. Cameron's private sitting-room. After she had greeted her guest she introduced Miss Day, and when she was about to leave the room, asked her to remain.

So Marjorie went to her seat in the alcove. She had no share in the half-hour's conversation which followed, but it had more or less interest for her.

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She made her woman's rapid mental comments on the stranger. He was not handsome, she thought. But he had a manly, affirmative kind of presence, and the clear, resonant quality of his voice indicated a forceful character. His dress, when she descended to that, was in keeping, too, a dark, perfectly fitting riding-suit.

In a few moments, however, Marjorie had almost forgotten young Elderby in observing Mrs. Cameron. There was a new life and pleasure in her face. Something of its lost youth had come back.

"You look like your father, Philip Elderby."

"You could not say anything which would give me greater pleasure, Mrs. Cameron; but it is one people do not often afford me."

"Probably not," searching his face with eyes which still retain much of their old brilliance. "The likeness is not one to strike people at a glance, but your father and I were old friends."

There was something, less in the speech than in the tone, which struck Marjorie's ear. Her nature was intuitive. It flashed across her that the young man's father had made a lasting impression on the proud, reserved woman's heart.

While the two continued to talk of Jack's father and mother, Mrs. Cameron was saying to herself, with something of the former coquette's vanity and something of the old sentiment, blended with pensive reminiscence, —

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"I might have married him too, if, if — it had seemed the best thing to do, — dear old Philip Elderby!"

But the Elderbys were not rich, and the heir of Hugh Cameron had already acquired a large fortune with the prospect of soon amassing an immense one; so the young beauty sacrificed her romance. But it had been deep enough to lend a certain glamour, thirty-five years afterward, to the son of her dead lover.

The talk went on between the two in an animated fashion. Hearing it, you would have taken it for granted they must have known each other a long time. Jack related some characteristic anecdotes of his father, which amused his hostess. That tall, vigorous, manly young presence, brought back to the wearied, self-centred woman, something of the life and brightness of her youth. She almost forgot her years, her invalidism, her griefs.

All this time the figure in the alcove sat quiet, as though it were one of the statues in the drawing-room; but young Elderby was never for a moment oblivious of its presence.

Before his call was over Jack had presented his sister's card and compliments, and assured Mrs. Cameron it would afford him much pleasure to be of any service to her. This was true enough. He felt under a deep obligation to the lady, though it would hardly have flattered her, had she suspected

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its source. As it was, she responded most graciously, even going so far as to suggest Mr. Elderby's coming over some day to lunch. "If he could endure to exchange an hour of the pleasures of Red Ledge for the dulness of Cameron Brae," she added.

When the young man assured Mrs. Cameron that the prospect of the contrast was delightfully attractive to him, he had never made a more truthful assertion.

Jack Elderby had certainly cause to congratulate himself as he rode back to Red Ledge that morning. His whole move had been a success. He had seen the young woman in gray; he had learned her name. If they should meet he would have the right of an acquaintance to accost her. As an afterthought, too, he told himself he had greatly enjoyed the meeting with Mrs. Cameron and her revival of old memories and associations connected with his father.

Galloping smartly along the still, rugged highways he said to himself, —

"Her face did not disappoint me — thank God for that! What a harmony there is about her — face, figure, voice, and movement, as though everything best and finest had gone to the making of her, soul and body!"

Soon after young Elderby left, her morning service finished, Marjorie went to her room pondering over her flash of insight into Mrs. Cameron's past — an insight which gave her some new sympathy for the lady.

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Then young Elderby, naturally enough, came up again in her thoughts, and she disposed of him in a woman's swift, incisive way.

"He was agreeable; his manner toward Mrs. Cameron certainly was perfect." She thought his face too, "when one came to know it well, and before that all faces were, more or less, an unknown quantity, would be a fine one."

She hoped, but it was chiefly for Mrs. Cameron's sake, "that Mr. Elderby would keep his promise of coming to lunch."

A little later this episode had quite slipped out of her mind, as she sat absorbed in her letter to Dr. Amoury with all she had to tell him of Donil Kemp.

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XVII

AN AGREEABLE INTERVIEW

Two days later Marjorie went again to Moose Falls. It was easy to reach her favorite cascade by the little footpath which zizagged among the underbrush of the steep bank. She sat down here in the green dusk of the familiar nook with the great pine rafters overhead, and the broken rock-walls about, half smothered in tangles of vine and fern. She listened to the cascade until all its voices blended in a solemn, joyful psalm. Then the scene came up again when she was here the last time with Donil Kemp.

There was a sudden movement on her right. She turned with a smile on her lips and in her eyes, expecting to see a lean, scrubby little form, a narrow, sun-browned face which appeared to have resolved itself mostly into nose; and instead, she encountered a tall, shapely figure, a dark, striking face, whose owner was lifting his hat to her.

"Mr. Elderby!"

The surprise was complete; the first feeling one of disappointment. Perhaps there was a touch of this in her tone.

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"I assure you this is a great pleasure to me, Miss Day, unless it prove an intrusion to you." The dark, penetrating eyes were on her face.

Marjorie's slight vexation disappeared with her smile.

"I hope that remark does not mean to imply I have made a private preserve of Moose Falls!"

"At least I will agree never to contest your claim if you will allow me to share this cascade with you a short time."

"Really, Mr. Elderby, your request is so modest I can't refuse it!"

He heard her laugh now for the first time. It was a low laugh; it seemed to come from some inward joyousness. It chorded, at least so it struck the hearer, with the rippling and gliding of the water.

He threw himself down, a little way off, on a bed of gray mosses and pine-needles.

"You have chosen the most charming point in the whole scene for your study," he said. "That illuminated spray is alone worth a ride from Red Ledge!"

"I am glad you think so. When I go among the banks and rocks, and enjoy all the infinite variety of water pictures, I always come back here with a feeling that this scene is the finest of all. Is this your first visit to Moose Falls, Mr. Elderby?"

"My second. The first one whetted my appetite, and I promised myself a speedy and longer visit."

In this way the talk opened between the young

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man and woman. It went on for the next hour in a bright, informal fashion, which it would hardly have done in a drawing-room. In this grander, infinitely more beautiful room of nature's building and decorating, thoughts, fancies, suggestions, came rapidly. The Falls in all their manifold variety and loveliness formed the principal topic; but the talk often wandered away from this into by-paths, or opened into wider horizons. It was, in short, the talk of a very clever young man and woman, who would be certain to find that the longer they were thrown together, the more they had to say to each other, and that they had the great sympathy in common, of a genuine love of nature.

After a while they left the Falls, and wandered about leisurely from one point to another, remarking some fresh charm and beauty of sculpture or color at every step. Marjorie was surprised to discover how much she had missed in previous visits. Young Elderby was constantly drawing her attention to some new freak of the water, some feature of the landscape, which had never struck her before. It was a novel experience to have an intelligent companion, with so keen a feeling for nature, share her enjoyment in the beautiful waterway.

Marjorie had once spoken to Mrs. Cameron of Moose Falls and of the surprise and delight they had afforded her, but she met with only a languid response.

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"Yes; they are certainly very picturesque, Miss Day; but, dear me, what a walk for you! We used to have rustic picnics there occasionally. My husband was naturally fond of his birthplace, and liked to make the most of all the fine points about here."

It was more than an hour after their meeting that the talk of young Elderby and Miss Day took a slightly more personal turn. They had seated themselves on a rustic seat, one of several scattered about in a little clump of cedars on a sloping bank, and were watching the rocks and a group of gay, young people chattering and laughing among them.

"I suppose all this scene is very familiar to you, Miss Day," said young Elderby.

"Six weeks ago I had never seen the Falls," she replied. "I heard the people at the house speaking about them, though the talk gave me no idea of all this varied grandeur and beauty. One afternoon I started out, resolved to see for myself. A walk of three or four miles has no more terrors for me than it has for a healthy Englishwoman. So I came here and saw the picture, and heard the song of Old Lanes."

"How perfectly that name suits this drowsy old town!"

A smile flashed up at him from under the little gray sun-hat. But it was less a smile of the lips than of the eyes.

"It must have been a happy inspiration of some

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early settler. The name itself makes a suggestive picture for the imagination. It seems as though a scent of wild blooms clung to it. I half suspect that name had a good deal to do with my coming here."

She laughed again to herself in a low, amused way.

"I should imagine you must find it immensely dull here at times," said young Elderby, venturing on a remark more directly personal than any he had yet addressed to Miss Day.

"Oh, no; I have never found it in the least dull, although it has often seemed strange and far away."

She did not say from what.

"I should think that grand, silent, old house with its invalid mistress, and its memories of ancient gayeties, might give one a feeling occasionally that the air was haunted. Do you never have a glimpse of some ghost gliding about the scene of his former revels?"

"Never! But I am dismally prosaic, Mr. Elderby. I haven't imagination enough even to believe in spookery! But the rooms and halls, when I go about them, as well as the grounds, do seem to hold memories of those old splendors and revels. At least I find myself dreaming about them."

"Your friend certainly must find it delightful to have some young life and sympathy once more about her. I can imagine, Miss Day, what a new interest and pleasure your presence must give her."

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"I suppose you mean Mrs. Cameron," said Marjorie, and there was a touch of reserve in her tone. "She has been very kind to me."

A moment later she changed the subject, naturally enough.

"Do you see, Mr. Elderby, the lights on those bushes and savin clumps across the river? What a burst of color! How it illuminates all that green! One might fancy it was the flash and glow from Oberon's train as it came sweeping through the forest."

"It reminds me of an old Dutch interior I once saw in a gallery at Amsterdam," replied the young man. "The light on the rafters had just that rich, swarthy glow. I have not thought of the picture for years. I don't even know the artist's name. But it has all come up now, with the masses of deep shadows, and the powerful drawing of the figures — half a dozen travellers, young, strong limbed, broad-shouldered fellows, around the breakfast-table at an old inn. I see the attitude and the expression on the face of each traveller. As one looked, one almost seemed to hear the clink of the glasses, the roars of mirth, while those red and gold lights shone among the black rafters."

Riding back to Red Ledge, late in the afternoon, Jack Elderby reflected that he knew no more of Miss Day's history when they parted at the bridge which spanned Moose River below the Falls, than when he

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first met her in Mrs. Cameron's drawing-room. But this ignorance was, perhaps, one element of the attraction she had for his imagination.

He was conscious, however, that during the last two hours their acquaintance had made a sensible advance. Then he thought of Hester, and of what she would have said, had she seen him sitting by the cascade that afternoon with a strange young woman, and known that he rode all those miles for the merest chance of meeting her!

There was a flash of fun in his dark, frank eyes, and then they grew serious. He was thinking of Grace Halifax, and of that moonlit walk last week which had come so near deciding his fate. He drew a deep breath. For the first time he was conscious that the scene he had witnessed from Old Lanes tavern was at the bottom of his failure to propose that night. A little later he was saying to himself, —

"Poor Hester! She has set her heart on it."

There must have been some secret annoyance behind all this, his tone was so sharp when he exclaimed a moment later, "Come Hercules, old fellow, get up!"

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XVIII

JACK ELDERBY MAKES A DISCOVERY

It would be difficult to describe at this juncture the nature of Jack Elderby's feeling for Marjorie Day. He was not, at least consciously, in love with her. Had the idea occurred to his own mind, he would have resented it as an insult to herself, an outrage on his own feeling. Not the less, it was one which he had never before experienced for any woman. He had long ago, as he believed, left his green and salad days with their young dreams and romance behind him. Yet a woman had come into his life as silently and with as supreme an influence as the moon glides into a summer night and dominates it with her white shining, and transmutes all common things into a new mystery and loveliness. Jack Elderby, although he had his share of the modern critical tendency, did not attempt to analyze his feelings. He only felt that Miss Day had become a new interest and power in his life. Had he ever put the matter in words, even to his own thought, he would have said she affected him like some strains of music, like certain poems, like a picture, all whose form and color have been penetrated by some noble idea.

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She — this woman of whom he had seen so little, of whom he knew almost nothing — stood apart to him. An atmosphere fragrant with fine thoughts and feelings surrounded her in his fancy. It was curious, too, how often he found himself pondering the way people, events, ideas, would strike her, especially in their higher relations. Yet it was a fact that he was at this time more restless, self-dissatisfied, than he had ever been in his hitherto easy, agreeable existence. His conscience rebuked him; his ideals reproached him; his life convicted him. Perhaps this was one reason why he threw himself with such *verve* into the amusements and gayeties of Red Ledge, though he secretly regarded these, for the most part, an unmitigated bore. The women decided that no programme, however attractive, was settled until he had pronounced on it. His advice and services were in constant demand, and he threw himself into games and picnics, into tableaux and private theatricals, as though they were the things of most consequence in the world.

Hester rallied him for being so indispensable to Red Ledge femininity, but she was, in her heart, immensely proud of her brother's popularity. He and Grace Halifax kept up their old habit of banter and jest, in which sometimes one, sometimes the other, got the better. In the gay life about them, full of varied demands on their time and interest, they were seldom by themselves, a fact of which so keen an

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observer as Mrs. Wilmarth could not fail to take notice.

But she was not disquieted. "I am sure things are working toward that happy consummation I so devoutly wish for," she told herself. "My Jack shall win his lovely Jill!"

In all her plans at this time, Mrs. Wilmarth would have told herself she was actuated solely by a desire for her brother's happiness. She never suspected there was a strong alloy of personal pride and ambition in her eagerness for this marriage. But she was fully alive to the *éclat* which Grace's beauty, position in the fashionable world, and prospective fortune, would give to the whole affair. She allowed herself to indulge in pleasing reflections over the sensation which the engagement would create when it was first announced. Then what a grand wedding there would be! Of course the Halifaxes would send off their youngest daughter — the flower of the family — in a blaze of glory. How the newspapers would dilate on the splendor of the bridal, the loveliness of the bride, Grace Halifax Elderby!

Mrs. Wilmarth was not herself a fanatical Anglomaniac, but some of her friends were. She would find it agreeable occasionally to speak of Jack staying at Lord Ambleton's country-house, or going for a week or two to his brother-in-law's shooting-box in the Highlands. But she would do this so simply that the most cynical of her friends could never accuse

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her of making a point of her titled connections. Mrs. Wilmarth never boasted. Her position was too assured to need any propping of that sort. Then it was not in the Elderby blood to affect any kind of pinchbeck.

As for Marjorie Day she herself had too many things to absorb her attention at this time to give much thought to young Elderby. Their two hours at the Falls had made an impression in his favor; but she supposed the meeting had come about by the purest accident.

Two or three days after it occurred, Marjorie had effected what she regarded as an immense departure in Mrs. Cameron's routine. This had acquired from habit almost the fixedness of an Eastern court. Miss Day had induced that lady to take her lunch on a small piazza on which her private sitting-room opened. The day was lovely as a day in the midsummer New England can be, with sunshine and sapphire skies, and little winds loitering and rustling among the leaves.

To the housekeeper's and servants' measureless astonishment, the table had been prepared in the pretty, vine-draped piazza, and Mrs. Cameron had allowed herself to be wheeled out to it. It was a novel experience to one who had hardly set foot outside her own apartments for years.

Marjorie had just taken her seat at the table, and was silently observing the look of fresh interest in

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Mrs. Cameron's face, when a card was brought to the lady.

"Mr. Elderby has come!" she said to Miss Day, with a tone of genuine pleasure. Then she gave her commands to the servant.

"Present Mrs. Cameron's compliments to Mr. Elderby, and say she would be happy to have him join her at lunch."

Three hours later the young people stood together on the front piazza. It was evident from their conversation that the acquaintance had made some agreeable progress. The talk ran in an agreeable vein,—with almost a touch of *bon camaraderie*, like that of people who had known each other a long time.

Young Elderby's appearance on the scene had been an event in the silent, stately house at Old Lanes. He brought with him an atmosphere from that brilliant world out of which the mistress of Cameron Brae had long vanished.

But in the novelty and informality of the out-door lunch, in the contagious presence of this strong, forceful young manhood, Mrs. Cameron returned for the time to something of her former self. That Jack Elderby's society should stimulate and amuse her was much a matter of course. It had almost always an agreeable, buoyant effect on people. Yet the talk would lose much of its point and sparkle if one attempted to repeat it. It passed, by easy gradations, from the life at Red Ledge, of which Jack drew some

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vivid, amusing pictures, to remote places and periods. He related incidents of his father's life at home and while the two were travelling together. Some of the incidents were very characteristic and amusing, especially when set before one in the vivid, picturesque style of the speaker. There was a new animation in the pale, wearied face, and the smile more than once became a laugh at some comic adventure, or some racy comment of young Elderby's.

Marjorie, watching the hostess, as she sat there in her easy-chair, with dim sunbeams flickering among the laces, fine as frost-work, and on the lovely white hair, said to herself again, —

"What a beauty she must have been!"

The three lingered long at the lunch-table, where the dainty food was served with rare old china and family silver and fragrant flowers, just brought from the grounds. To the guest the whole thing seemed delightfully informal and poetic. It was such a charming contrast, he thought, to the crowds and the gorgeously frescoed dining-room at Red Ledge, with the endless buzz of voices and the threadbare jokes.

Perhaps he did not give full credit to one element of his pleasure at that time; yet it was one whose absence would have made all the difference in the world to him. He was fully conscious of the young, delicate face opposite to him. He did not lose one arch gleam in the beautiful eyes, — not one of the smiles which flickered about the lips.

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Marjorie had dressed herself for the lunch with a regard to the heat, which had now the fervor of dog-days. She wore a white lawn, the jacket fastened about her waist with a sash of pale violet. A scarf of the same tint was knotted about her throat. It was a color her father had liked to see her wear. The effect had struck Mrs. Cameron when the young woman came down to lunch.

Marjorie had borne very little share in the conversation at table, beyond replying to some remark which Mrs. Cameron or Mr. Elderby occasionally addressed to her.

When the meal was over, Marjorie arranged Mrs. Cameron's shawl and cushions, with some other slight services, which did not strike young Elderby as unusual. Not one of Miss Day's graceful motions, however, escaped him.

The visitor's interest in Cameron Brae had gratified its mistress. It was a kind of religion with her to keep up the place with all the care and completeness of its most brilliant days. The house was always prepared for guests, — halls and rooms opened and arranged as when they were full of the coming and going of joyous people. The grounds were as carefully tended as though gay groups still made picturesque color among the walks and shrubberies.

This care for all the details of Cameron Brae, together with her large correspondence, afforded its mistress perpetual interest, and kept her, despite her

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seclusion, a good deal in touch with life. There was nothing, therefore, to surprise one who knew her habits, in her remark to Mr. Elderby, some time after lunch, when he had spoken of taking leave.

"I should be glad to have you see something more of Cameron Brae before you go, Mr. Elderby. You may find some interesting pictures in the drawing-room and library, if you can spare the time to look them over. Then there are the grounds, with plenty of shade and coolness among the shrubberies. If you care to see them, I shall have to ask Miss Day to accompany you, as I cannot do the honors myself."

At that moment Jack Elderby blessed Mrs. Cameron in his heart.

This explains how it came about that the young people were standing, late in the summer afternoon, in the front veranda.

They had passed an hour in the drawing-room and library, enjoying the art collection. This contained a good many masterpieces. Mr. and Mrs. Cameron had decided tastes in pictures, and had lavished large sums on old Dutch interiors, and sea and coast views, which the gentleman had much affected.

There were some beautiful studies from Venice, fine heads from the modern French school, and lovely pastoral scenes. Marjorie had spent many a half-hour among these pictures, and the statuettes and tapestries, and all the beautiful and dainty curios which the owners had collected in their trips abroad.

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At length, when the fiery noon-heats were over, they went into the grounds. Here a pleasure of a different kind awaited them, among the twisting walks, the rare trees and shrubberies, the world of rich blooms, and the green nooks, on all of which the landscape gardener had expended his utmost skill.

Marjorie Day had, since she came to Old Lanes, held herself at a constant tension. To do this involved more or less strain on soul and flesh. Nothing but her daily walks saved her from sharp recoils, from occasional moods of depression and homesickness. It is not an easy thing for the most evenly poised nature to change the habits and interests of a lifetime; not easy to be always at guard with one's self; to dwell, day by day, in an atmosphere of restraint and reticence. Marjorie had borne the ordeal in a way which must have amazed anybody who knew her nature and her past; but the strain had seemed almost intolerable at times. To-day, however, the self-imposed burden slipped out of her thoughts as if by magic. She simply forgot all about it. She was herself once more, talking with Mrs. Cameron's agreeable young guest in that sportive, joyous fashion which had so often amused and charmed men, old and young.

When Marjorie Day was most herself, she was most what she had been with her father. In this long summer afternoon, in the freedom and the agreeable companionship, she had gone back from the

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alien present to the old familiar life. There was an air, less of young womanhood than of young girlhood — the girlhood that is tenderly reared, and made the centre of household love — about her.

Could this joyous creature, with her bright, glancing looks and talk, which stirred his own merriment and provoked his keenest sallies of wit, be the young woman to whom he had listened when she sat under the pine-tree with Donil Kemp?

During the walk Jack Elderby asked this question more than once.

They came at last into a remote corner of the grounds, where greenery and bloom had been left to run riot. Lush vines climbed old bowlders. Broken bits of sunshine coming through the trees, illumined the tangle of bushes, flowering thickets, and weedy growths.

"What a lovely piece of boscage this is!" exclaimed the young man, looking with eager surprise about him. "It is easy to fancy one's self in the heart of Arden Forest."

"Perhaps," rejoined Marjorie. "Only my childhood's Wood of Arden was so unlike this!"

"Will you tell me, Miss Day, what that was like?"

"Oh, it was not half so grand a place! There was an old orchard at the foot of our garden, and a path, a narrow lane, ran between the stone wall and the fruit trees. Such a lovely old place, the air full

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of the scent of blossoms or the sweetness of ripening fruits. The trees were all old patriarchs with mossy, gnarled boles. Papa and I used to walk there a great deal. It was so easy to slip down through the long, rambling old garden into that orchard, and have all the world to ourselves. There was a stone wall too, smothered in vines and mosses. Everything had such an ancient air. This must have suggested the name to papa."

"And when you walked in that old orchard, you were Rosalind of course, Miss Day?"

"Oh, no!" she answered quickly; "I was never anything but 'Marjorie' to papa."

Young Elderby felt more secret exultation than he would had he won a game at chess. He had actually learned Miss Day's christian name.

It was not more than half an hour later when the two stood, as we have seen, in the great front veranda of Cameron Brae. Young Elderby was loath to leave the figure at his side, its graceful slenderness robed in that simple white, with the violet at the waist and snow-columned throat. He looked again at the clustering golden-brown rings which crowned the beautiful head. He wished his visit were all to go over again.

Marjorie certainly was in no hurry to have him leave. She was not aware of it herself, but none the less, this young man from Red Ledge was the necromancer who had banished the present, and brought

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back to her the familiar past. For the moment she no longer had a part to play, only an alien's part, at Cameron Brae.

"What a noble old estate it is!"

Young Elderby said this, looking over the wide slope of lawn, the mass of shrubberies, the great avenue winding down to the front gate.

"At first I thought it must be intensely dull for you, Miss Day. But now I have felt the charm of the place, I can quite understand your pleasure in it — your liking to be here."

His words had undone the spell he had woven. Marjorie came back sharply to a sense of her real relations to all the things about her. It was like a shock. She could not fail to see in an instant Mr. Elderby's mistake. Indeed, it was inevitable. She had never asked herself what he thought of her position at Cameron Brae. It was now forced upon her that he regarded her as a guest. In their early acquaintance she had certainly considered all this no affair of his; but now the whole matter took on a new aspect. Ought she to tell him?

This question was uppermost in Marjorie's thoughts as she answered with a little change of tone, —

"I am glad you have felt the attraction of Cameron Brae. It can never seem dull to you again."

"And your friend," he added, not conscious of the slight reserve of tone, "must be an interesting companion with her wide experiences and store of memo-

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ries. It is a hard fate that she should be shut up here, even with all this beauty and luxury."

"It is sad for Mrs. Cameron. I am glad you came to her to-day, Mr. Elderby. You have afforded her a rare pleasure."

He did not observe that in both replies there was a marked suppression of herself.

A few minutes later Jack Elderby, riding away in the sunset, repeated to himself several times, as though he were trying a new tune, —

"Marjorie Day! Marjorie Day!"

She went up the staircase with a statelier pose of her head than usual. She was saying to herself, —

"You have been playing a false *rôle!* You should not have forgotten yourself so entirely. He believes you something you are not — at least here and now. After all, it seems a good deal like masquerading."

That thought hurt her self-respect. She was conscious, and humiliated by the consciousness too, that it would cost her a struggle to tell young Elderby what her real position was at Cameron Brae.

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XIX

DONIL KEMP IN THE FOREGROUND

"Oh, my dear little boy, I am glad to see you again!"

Voice and face held a greeting for Donil Kemp a little unlike that which they held for any other in the world, unless it might be Dr. Amoury.

Marjorie had been sitting in her favorite place before the middle cascade at Moose Falls, when the boy, light and lissome as some wild animal, appeared before her. The gray eyes looked into the beautiful face with some expression which came nearer being adoration than anything else. Marjorie laid her hand on the soiled sleeve. She had learned by this time, however rapid might be the mental processes going on under the ragged, dust-colored hair, they would take their own time to become audible. Donald's wits had not been trained to fluent expression. He was always shy and awkward at the beginning of an interview.

"Sit down by me, Donil," she said encouragingly, "and tell me what you have been doing. You see, I want to know all about you."

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The red, skinny fingers wove themselves into a knot.

"I comed twicet, I did," said Donil, "and looked all round for you. I had to be at work, lively too, gettin' fish, and pickin' berries, and doin' Matt's jobs. He run off, and tried it on his own hook for three days."

Marjorie did not feel inclined, under the circumstances, to discuss the moral aspects of Matt's attempts to gain a larger acquaintance with the world. Before she could speak again, her attention was attracted by a long, blue and yellow, diagonal streak across the boy's temple. This mark was not of the kind which would disappear under a vigorous application of soap and water.

"O Donil," she cried out, "how did you get that cruel hurt?"

There was an instant or two of dazed stare on Donil's part. Then, with a sudden change of expression, he exclaimed, —

"Oh! I know. 'Bijah's been on a high old drunk. He made things spin round lively. I seed him a-comin' for me, his eyes a-glarin' like two flames. I dodged, and made like lightnin' for the door, and he after me, yellin' and cussin.' He jest got one lick at me with his fist, but I was too smart for another; and when he seed I'd cut away, he turned inside agin' a-roarin' and ragin'. I was stunned like for a minit or two. The blow made me see stars.

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Then I crawled back, and hung round the door. I was kind o' feared for *Miss* Hearn. Nobody knowed what he might do to her when he was on such a rampage."

Marjorie did not speak. Her face showed all her inward recoil and horror at Donil's story. Of course it was too familiar an event in his life for him to be conscious how it must strike the lady; but the look spoke for itself.

"Oh, I don't mind now," he said in a tone evidently intended to relieve her. "'Bijah's blow has got over stingin', and he'll be smart if he gits another at me. He wouldn't had that one, only I was tired, and had gone off into a drowse. It was curis, though," in another key, half to himself.

"What was curious, Donil?"

"I was thinkin' o' the way *Miss* Hearn stood up to him. There he was a-tearin' round and threatenin', and she all alone, and I outside lookin' in at a hole in the door, and makin' up my mind to rush in if he dared to lay his hands on her."

A flush ran up suddenly under the tan.

"I know you would, my brave little boy. You would have sprung to the poor woman's defence, as you sprang to save me that time."

"But there wasn't no need. I never seed *Miss* Hearn act like that. She was sittin' in the corner, all drawed up, not makin' a sound, and lookin' scar't, as she allers does when 'Bijah's on a tear; but all of

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a sudden she ris' up, and smashed her pipe on the bricks, and stepped right up to him as bold as a lion, — yes, siree, she did!

"'Do it, 'Bijah Hearn!' she cried out. 'I've bore it long enough. Jest put an end to all your threats by murderin' me! What do you s'pose I want to live for? Ain't you broke my heart? Ain't you dragged your family into the gutter? Ain't you starved and beat your children, and sent 'em to the devil as fast as they could go? Ain't you had nothin' but kicks and cusses for the poor little orphan you cheated out o' his rights, after agreein' to be a father to him? Ain't you turned yourself into the miserable critter that goes tearin' and roarin' round here in a way to shame a wild beast? Ain't you brought me to the desperate woman who stands here at last, with nothin' more to ask of you except to finish your work by killin' her?'"

The shy, silent boy was quite carried out of himself by the remembrance of this dramatic scene. He returned now to much of his old tone and manner, as he said, —

"I heerd it all as I peeked through the crack."

"But what happened afterward?" asked Marjorie quickly.

"'Bijah, he jest stood still and stared at her a minute. She wasn't scar't a mite. She was like them wild things in the woods I've seed druv to bay. Then his arm dropped, and he slunk off to the corner

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a-mutterin' and cussin' to himself. Is was all over with him for that time, anyhow. She'd took him down oncet. I kinder think he'll remember, too."

"The poor woman had been goaded to madness," Marjorie burst out, passionately moved by the scene, which Donil set before her in his rough dialect.

"Such a wretch," she continued, "has no right to go at large. The authorities of Old Lanes should take him in hand."

At this speech Donil had one of his silences. He wriggled his toes among the ferns and stones.

Marjorie for her part sat still. It was useless, she told herself again, to attempt, for the present, to deal with this problem of poverty, misery, cruelty. Any real service for Donil must mean a radical change — must break him off thoroughly from his present life. At this moment Mrs. Ainslee recurred to her. In that large, motherly heart there must be some vacant room for the poor little waif. Her imagination caught eagerly at this idea. In that kindly home atmosphere, how his whole starved nature — mind and heart — would open! He would go to school, of course. Then, with his bright wits and native handiness, he could be useful in various ways to Mrs. Ainslee. Marjorie had made the discovery, in their early acquaintance, that Donil could read. Mrs. Hearn had taught him his letters and some early primer lessons. The rest he appeared to have done

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for himself. His progress, despite all drawbacks, had so far outstripped the young Hearns, as to serve for an example to her own sons with their mother.

Marjorie, sitting on the bank, had a vision of the future boy at Briarsley, in fresh clothes and neatly brushed hair, the old habits dropped with the coarse vernacular, — a new Donil emerged from his old chrysalis.

The boy, looking up suddenly, encountered the pity in Miss Day's eyes.

"If I were a man, Donil," speaking half to herself, "you should not stay under that wretched roof another day."

"There ain't no other place for me," he said with the air of a philosopher. "Then he ain't allers drunk, you know. Sometime, maybe, I'll make up my mind to run away; but if I did, I don't know jest where to cut for."

"That is true; and you must not think of running away while I am here. You will promise me not to do that?" in some vague alarm, suggested by his speech.

And again the lady's beautifully moulded hand clasped the rough, grimed one of the boy.

"I ain't never brunged my mind to it," answered Donil. "A feller likes to stay among things he's allers knowed."

He looked around on the scene, made up of sweeping waters and lichen-covered rocks and green, fern-

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clad slopes, with some feeling astir in his heart and brain, which a poet might have set in musical rhymes.

At last Marjorie opened a small Russia-leather hand-bag, and took out from a snowy napkin a couple of large, golden-brown pears, some dainty sandwiches, and cake.

"I brought those for you, Donil," she said.

There was a bright greed in his eyes, like that of a wild animal. It hurt Marjorie to see it.

"All that for me?" he asked with sharp eagerness.

"All for you, Donil."

"My jiminy!"

The next moment he was devouring the food. Donil licked his lips, and crunched and smacked in a way that would have settled his status in polite society. But if Marjorie's tastes were shocked at first, she soon forgot everything else in watching his pleasure over his feast.

"You liked it very much, then?" as he looked up and met her smile after the last morsel had disappeared.

He drew a sigh of ineffable satisfaction.

"You better b'lieve I did! Do some folks have things like that to eat every day?"

"Oh, yes! What do you have to eat, Donil?"

"It depends on luck. Sometimes a feller gets a good meal; sometimes it's mighty scant pickin's; sometimes it ain't so much as a bone a cur would snap at!"

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"Is it so bad as that?"

"In course. But don't you look so cut up! A feller gits used to it, as he does to lickin's and things."

This boy's life had evidently taught him some philosophy which he might have missed with smoother fortunes. He went on in a moment.

"It ain't so hard in summer, when a feller's sure o' berries and things in the woods, and knows jist where the fish can be had in the streams; but when they're froze up in the winter, and taters and pork and dried apples gin out, it's tough."

Again there was silence, into which came the happy chorus of the waters.

After a while Donil looked up.

"Oh! I forgot," he said.

"Forgot what?"

"To say 'thank ye, ma'am,' for them nice vict'els you brunged me."

"Well, you have said it now, and you are welcome."

Marjorie's face broke into sparkling merriment.

Not long afterward she was asking softly and gravely, —

"Have you thought, Donil, of what we talked about when we were here before?"

His fingers and toes went into action again.

"There's some things you said I've thought on a heap."

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"What were they?"

"It was what you said about God."

"And it made you glad to believe that was true?"

"Ye-es; if a feller could be jest certin, you know. And I don't b'lieve them things I did afore, — no, siree, I don't."

"I am very glad to hear you say that. If you try to do right, you will learn more and more about the true God, — the Father in heaven."

"There's somethin' else I should like to know about."

"Can't you tell me what it is, Donil?"

"It's a name 'Bijah says when he's drunk and swears. It seems as though he meant somebody. He calls it Christ. What does he mean?"

Marjorie sat still under this challenge. The boy who made it had been born in a christian land; yet the veriest little pagan, who had been all his life performing his rites before his fetish, might have asked this question, with just that air. And again she thought, If only she were a better woman! But it was to her, not to another, the question had been brought. Her lips, not another's, must answer it.

And again the grimed fingers were in her soft palm, and the sunshine was all about, and the waters went flocking and singing over the terrace, as she told Donil the story which is the hope and joy of the world. He listened with grave, solemn eyes riveted to her face. In a little while she forgot

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everything but the meanings she was trying to make clear to him. The story gathered a new power and beauty to her as she went on. Was it to her own soul or to Donil she was telling it?

Donil's young heart and imagination had been deeply impressed. It was all so wonderful, so vivid to him!

His strange, eager questions followed.

"You said it all happened so long ago. Was it a hundred years?"

"Do you know, then, what a hundred years mean, Donil?"

"In course; Matt teached me when we went ches'nuttin'. First, ten, then twenty, and so on."

"It is almost nineteen hundred years since the Christ came, — the Baby in the far-away manger, as I told you. And the world keeps his birthday now with happy greetings, with joyous times and beautiful gifts, because of *Him*, God's best gift of all His good ones. Have you never heard of Christmas, Donil?"

"I've heered the name, but I never knowed what it meant."

He was silent a while. When he looked up, there was a bright gleam in his eyes.

"What is it, Donil?"

"I was a-thinkin' when He was a-walkin' in them old streets away off there, and if I'd pushed in, and

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elbowed my way up to Him in the big crowd, and jest stood still, — and if He'd a-knowed, and turned round and looked, and not minded a bit on account o' my old clo'es. P'rhps He'd a-smiled and said a word or two, and then I'd a-gone away and never forgot. Do you s'pose He might a-done that?"

Marjorie's voice was tremulous as she answered, —

"Nobody ever went to Him in vain, Donil. Do you remember what I told you about the little children — how He held them in His arms while He blessed them?"

"Now I've heered about Him, I sha'n't ever say His name agin, when things goes wrong and I git mad. Do you s'pose He heered me?"

"But you are sorry, and you did not know. He will understand."

The talk lasted for nearly an hour afterward. Donil went with Marjorie up the bank. Before they parted she said to him, —

"Don't forget, Donil, to Whom you can tell everything."

"But God is so far off, and it makes a feller feel creepy like to think of speakin' to Him!"

"I know. But then you must think how easy you find it to talk to me; and I see you believe in me, trust in me. And if I am glad to hear, and want to help, think what God must be!"

"But I've seed you, and I ain't seed God; and" —

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a sudden light breaking into his eyes — "I *know'd* how good you be!"

As she went down the hill, Marjorie Day thought to herself that Donil Kemp had paid her the finest compliment she ever had in her life.

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XX

FACE TO FACE

"JACK ELDERBY!"

The tone was imperative. It had also a decided note of irritation. Jack had entered his sister's room a little before lunch.

"At your service, Mrs. Wilmarth."

He removed his cap, and made her an elaborate bow.

"I should immensely prefer you would be at the service of some other woman at this precious moment. I never was more vexed with you in my life!"

Mrs. Wilmarth stood by the mantel, her rather petite figure set off to advantage by a perfectly fitting morning-gown, and a deep-rimmed shade-hat with snowy ostrich plumes. Her dark, brilliant beauty was always enhanced by excitement. There was a flash of the eyes, a bend of the brows, with which her brother had been too long familiar not to know the signs.

"Your memory must have failed alarmingly! But will you please come at once to the point?"

The tone of good-natured *sang froid* might tend to appease or farther provoke her.

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"That is precisely what I wish to do! Grace has gone to ride to the Glades with young Darrow."

"I hope the Fates will send them a happy time."

"I devoutly hope they will do no such thing. You have treated Grace Halifax shamefully!"

"That attack has the true, sisterly ring! But your tempers were always becoming, Hester, if they were not agreeable to their victims. Come now! Don't stand there like another small, angry Titania, but let us sit down and talk it over comfortably, as though we were sensible man and woman."

Hester did not reply, but she condescended to take the rocking-chair which Jack pulled forward for her. He seated himself on one corner of the sofa. He regarded her an instant silently, stroking his mustache with the head of his cane.

"Begin, please. What have I done to offend you, Hester?"

"Done! It is what you have not done. Think of your allowing Grace to go off with that tiresome, conceited, young Darrow, when it was perfectfully understood at breakfast you were to accompany her."

"Oh, no; begging your pardon! I, at least, was absolutely ignorant of such an understanding."

"You won't at least deny that you heard the ride to the Glades talked over this morning?"

"Certainly not. All I deny is the slightest arrangement between Grace and myself. I saw

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Darrow talking with her after breakfast, and thought he had got ahead of me."

"There it is! You should not have let him."

"Do you think so? It strikes me that it only showed I did not wish to force myself on Grace with every occasion, and make every other fellow at Red Ledge curse me."

"Your consideration of other young men may do you honor! But you might have thought that something was due to Grace as your friend and my guest."

"But I insist that gives me no right to monopolize her in every instance. She has examples enough of masculine conceit before her in all conscience."

"I wish you would stop this lawyer's special pleading, Jack. It doesn't affect the case in point. I know Grace; I am sure she was chagrined at your absence this morning. It is not the first instance of the kind, either."

"Now, as your hand is in, or your tongue, — do excuse me, Hester, — suppose you cite another instance of my default. It's wholesome for a fellow, you know, to have his failings held up to him in this fashion!"

Mrs. Wilmarth ignored the sarcasm.

"Day before yesterday she expected you would be her partner at lawn-tennis, and lo! you had coolly disappeared on a ride to Old Lanes."

"And a dozen fellows were in a seventh heaven to

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take my place! Why shouldn't they have an occasional chance too?"

This view of the matter was particularly irritating to Mrs. Wilmarth; but she made an effort to control herself.

"She is your boyhood's old playmate and companion, Jack. She must naturally expect an amount of attention from you which she would not from other men."

"And I certainly have never meant to be remiss. But as for hanging around a woman all the time, talking banalities, paying her silly compliments, getting up a desperate flirtation, and all that sort of thing — well, you don't need to be told at this late day, it is not in my line!"

Mrs. Wilmarth was silent now. She felt the talk was approaching dangerous ground. But time was growing precious. She had felt so secure, she had allowed things to take their own course. But she had grown uneasy of late. Miss Halifax's friends were urging her to join them at the White Mountains. It was understood that Mrs. Wilmarth would accompany her friend if she first came to Red Ledge. Miss Halifax was to join her sister at her English country-house early in the fall. Mrs. Wilmarth and Lady Ambleton had been intimate in their girlhood. Hester knew perfectly that the elder sister's ambition for the younger would aim at a title. She could imagine just the look and tone with which Lady

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Ambleton would speak of "poor Grace throwing herself away on that young Boston attorney!"

Mrs. Wilmarth's observation had satisfied her that Jack was, at this crisis, master of the situation; but it would be another thing if matters were not settled before Grace's departure. Was it not a foregone conclusion that she would stifle the voice of her own heart amid the influences and ambitions which would be brought to bear on her?

Well as Mrs. Wilmarth knew her brother, she did not suspect that he had penetrated her purpose. She was, however, so exasperated by his indifference to the great prize which fortune was now dangling before his eyes, that it would have been a relief to her feelings to spring to her feet, make a rush at him, and give his ears a sound boxing. She had done that more than once when she was a slip of a girl, and he three years her junior in petticoats.

But with all Jack Elderby's good humor, his sister was perfectly aware of some granite at bottom, which must be taken into account at this time.

She was satisfied that a certain line of argument would not advance her cause. She never made the slightest allusion to Grace's fortune. But Jack's last remark had afforded her the opportunity to turn his own words against him.

"It is certainly not a question of flirtation with Grace Halifax or any other woman. I thought you must know that, Jack."

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"Then I assure you again, nothing was farther from my intention than failing Grace in any civility, courtesy, attention — what will you, Hester?"

"Civility! Courtesy! What words those are when it comes to you and Grace Halifax!"

"Hester, are you bent on picking a quarrel with me?"

"I think it is very unkind in you, Jack, to ask such a question."

"Because I don't intend you shall, if I can avoid it. But you know I have a devil of a temper. It's dangerous to drive me too far."

A bright-witted woman had matched herself with Jack Elderby that morning, but she was acute enough to perceive she was not gaining anything by this talk. A troubled look came into her eyes. It pained her brother. He spoke again in a softened tone.

"Come, Hester, do let us be reasonable! If ever a man laid himself out to please a woman, I have been that man, you that woman, during these last weeks. Haven't I transformed myself into the chief manager of all these junketings, picnics, tableaux, and amateur*ish* theatricals! It has been a horrible bore! I have sometimes asked myself whether the chief purpose of my existence was to become the leader and showman of this hostelry's revels and fandangoes! Don't I deserve some credit now, for going through such a *rôle* without a grimace?"

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Mrs. Wilmarth was a little mollified.

"You always were a good fellow at heart, Jack. Of course, nobody knows that so well as I. I have no general complaint to bring against you. You have been perfect in all ways but one. You know Grace is the dearest friend I have, and I am sensitive where she is concerned."

"But how absurd it is to harp on this string, when she has as many lovers as Portia dangling about her!"

"But, don't you see, the others are not Jack Elderby?"

"No; and for his part, he is not going to assume everything on that ground."

Mrs. Wilmarth was a little puzzled. Was all this verbal fencing quite sincere on Jack's part, or was he parrying her remarks with the skill of a lawyer?

This doubt confused her a little. She changed her tactics.

"When we were all small people together, I used to indulge in a pretty romance about you and Grace," she said tentatively.

"I suppose girls are apt to do that sort of thing with their callow brothers."

"Was that careless tone only a part of Jack's usual indolent good-nature, or was it assumed for a purpose?"

Mrs. Wilmarth revolved this question in a com-

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plex mood made up of doubt, curiosity, and desperation. She made a bolder move now.

"But we are no longer callow boy and girl, and yet, I have held to that young romance, Jack; it has grown so dear to me that it will be a cruel disappointment if" —

There was a little pause. Jack played with his cane, and his face grew grave. He had never resolved with himself that he would not ask Grace Halifax to be his wife. But the talk of this morning had forced the matter on him, and lo! he found it settled already. In those few, silent moments, he saw that she could never be to him what he had lately dreamed. He was so surprised by the suddenness and absoluteness of the conviction that, for the moment, he forgot all about Hester. But there she sat, facing him with her bright, intent eyes. The time had come to speak now.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Hester." There was a touch of sadness in his voice. "I will even own to you there was a short time when I had the same dream too. But it is gone now absolutely!"

"Oh, don't say that, Jack!" Mrs. Wilmarth cried out passionately. "It will break my heart! Think of what Grace Halifax is!"

"Do you suppose I do not know all that? But the question, as you force me to say it, is between my own heart and me."

"Nonsense! That idea is pure moonshine. Of

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course, one might expect that sort of stuff from a novel-devouring sophomore, but from a sensible man" —

Hester saw by her brother's darkening face that she was going too far. She caught at a new hope.

"Then there is Grace herself. Isn't she to be thought of? I know her. There is no man among all those lovers you talk of, Jack Elderby, who has a chance beside" —

"Stop where you are, Hester!" Jack interrupted sternly. "You forget that a woman has no right to betray her friend's secret."

"Of course you are an honorable fellow to the core, Jack," Mrs. Wilmarth said, a little ashamed. "My feelings carried me rather over the line. But won't you ask Grace?"

"Would you have me do her such a wrong after what I have told you?"

"I did believe you had a little more common-sense!" Mrs. Wilmarth's passion broke the leash at last. "Of all the women in the world, Grace Halifax is the one best suited to you — young, beautiful, accomplished, charming. It maddens me to see you let the prize slip!"

"Do you think it wise to continue this talk, Hester?"

"Yes; I will free my mind now, if I die for it! You are the head and crown of fools, Jack Elderby!"

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"Well, have you cap and bells at hand?"

"I wish you would not insult me by these ill-timed jests. Do you know what you are doing? You are disappointing my fondest hopes, my proudest ambitions! It was for this one thing I invited Grace to Red Ledge. And there you sit with no more feeling for me after all my care and effort than the stick you are playing with."

"Do you think, if I had no feeling for you, I should sit here and tamely submit to all this talk! I acknowledge, Hester, that the thought of your pleasure was one of my greatest satisfactions when I dreamed what I have told you. But you will not deny that my own feelings, my own preferences, should weigh more than your pleasure in a matter of such consequence to me."

But she was not to be reasoned with, not to be appeased.

"Your feelings, your preferences, would not be in the way if you would allow them to be influenced by a little common-sense."

The look in his face showed her there was nothing to hope for, and in her disappointment and anger she broke out again.

"To think of Grace's fortune, too! You are not precisely a Crœsus. Half a million would weigh something in the scales with most men."

"I can't answer for most men. I know one who would feel himself a poltroon if he asked

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a woman to marry him, simply or chiefly, for her money."

"All these lofty and impractical notions are quite wasted on me. I shall never forgive you for this, Jack Elderby!"

"I'm sorry, Hester. But it would be worse not to forgive one's self. However, we must stop this."

He rose now.

"Will you tell me one thing?" Her gesture was half pleading, half imperious. "Is there any other woman in the way?"

There was a moment's pause. All Mrs. Wilmarth's roused curiosity was in her eyes. Then Jack answered quietly,—

"There is no woman in the world whom I have the faintest idea of asking to become my wife, if that is what you mean."

A moment later Mrs. Wilmarth was alone. She bolted the door, threw herself on the lounge, and though she was not much given to tears, burst into passionate weeping.

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XXI

A SURPRISE AND HOW HE TOOK IT

THE day after this interview with his sister, young Elderby rode over to Old Lanes. He was possessed by a desire to meet Miss Day again. The talk with Hester had been one of the most disagreeable things of his life. It had hurt him to disappoint her hopes so cruelly. Moreover, he was secretly not at ease about Grace. His *amour propre* might have been flattered by the knowledge that she cared for him. But the lower feeling was certain soon to be followed by a nobler one, — a keen regret lest that proud, beautiful girl, his old playmate, might have something to suffer for his sake.

Grace Halifax must always be to young Elderby something apart from those other women who had occasionally touched his imagination and sentiment, and left a certain brightness in his memory.

She had a deeper hold than this. Whenever the days of his boyhood came back, that girlish figure would dance into them, the fair face full of arch merriment, amid roseate atmospheres of youth and hope.

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But in their later acquaintance there was nothing which an honorable man must remember with a twinge of remorse. Jack's conscience could not accuse him of having crossed the line of their brother-and-sister intimacy into vague sentiment and love-making. Perhaps in this very fact lay the secret of his power over Grace Halifax.

There was one day, closing with a moonlit walk, which brought a certain doubt when he recalled it. He could not feel assured that something of all he had thought and felt had not crept into his looks, his tones, at that time. To this day Jack Elderby is not so certain as he would like to be.

His sister's last question had sent a flood of light through his consciousness. He had answered her truthfully; but it was none the less a fact that a woman *had* stood in the way of his declaring himself to Grace Halifax! That slender, unknown figure in gray had emerged on the hot, yellow highway at the critical moment.

Slight as had been his acquaintance with Miss Day since that time, she had been a new incentive, a fresh, invigorating power in his life. He may not have said this in precise words to himself, for her influence was quiet as it was potent. He might have compared it to the dawn rising with gracious stillness over the hills, and lo! a world filled with new light and life.

It is enough to say that a change had come over

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Jack Elderby of which Miss Day was the inspiring cause. He was no longer the easy, kindly natured, very clever young man, one of the world's favorites, and inclined to take the world at its own valuation. Life was a great deal more interesting than in the days when he said to his soul "*Cui Bono?*"

Life, too, had gained deeper meanings; it was strenuous with duties and responsibilities which he had never discerned, at all events, never *felt* before.

When he reached Cameron Brae, the young man left his cards for the ladies. In a few minutes Miss Day entered the drawing-room. She brought Mrs. Cameron's regrets, who was too indisposed to see him that morning. The young people had a half-hour to themselves. It was interesting, suggestive to both, and their talk again rippled easily and brightly about one topic and another.

But this talk was never afterward recalled by either. A few words, spoken near the close of the interview, made so profound an impression that everything which preceded it was swallowed up in those.

Marjorie had been laughing merrily at some bright repartee of young Elderby's. Perhaps it was that laugh — somehow making his own heart gladder — which suggested his next words; he recurred to Mrs. Cameron.

"I hope for your sake, as well as hers, this indisposition will not last."

"Thank you, Mr. Elderby. She did not sleep well.

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But there is nothing serious. I am sure she will be better this afternoon."

"She must be, Miss Day, if there is any contagion in the happy spirits of her guest."

There was a little pause. The clock on the mantel, one of the Louis Quatorze time, ticked the moments away softly as it had been doing for the last two centuries. Marjorie Day felt the time had come to speak. If she let it pass now she would stand convicted of her own conscience — a coward, a pretender, for the rest of her days. But the struggle was, in some respects, the sharpest she had ever known.

"I shall do my best to cheer her," said the soft, clear-keyed voice. "But you are mistaken, Mr. Elderby; I am not Mrs. Cameron's guest, I am her"— she seemed to pause for a word, and the beautiful head held itself a little more erect, the wild-rose bloom had vanished from her cheek, "maid!"

"Great heavens!" thought Jack Elderby.

The clock ticked, perhaps three times. Then he said in the most natural tone in the world, —

"Indeed! Do you see, Miss Day, how the light strikes that head of Diana at this moment, and brings out the half arch, half imperious smile, which the sculptor dreamed about her lips? It is so subtle, so exquisite too, that it needs just that sunbeam to reveal it."

Ten minutes later Marjorie Day went up the great

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staircase to her room. The wild-rose bloom was wide in her cheeks now; the large eyes were splendidly radiant.

"How perfectly he behaved!" she said to herself, pacing over the soft, white rugs of her chamber. "What a test of a man's true quality that was! No one but a gentleman to the core could have taken it in that way. He treated the fact of my being Mrs. Cameron's maid, — though that word does not quite express our relations, but it served — as though it were too slight a matter for a reply even, going on to speak of the paintings and porcelains precisely as though I had not told him. All the same, it must have been an immense surprise to him!

"Jack Elderby," it was probably the first time his name had crossed her lips in that familiar way, "you have been fairly tested! You belong to nature's order of gentlemen."

"After all," her father used to say, "that is the only one, when you come down to essentials, which is worth while belonging to. It comprehends all that is best in those other orders of man's creating."

Marjorie bent her head, as she concluded her apostrophe, with a slight, graceful obeisance, and she laughed to herself a half arch, half tremulous laugh.

She was very light-hearted, now the thing was over, once for all, as she went down to Mrs. Cameron.

Jack Elderby returned to Red Ledge that morning

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with a feeling that he had had the most stunning surprise of his life. Other emotions of a complex nature were blended with this, but the surprise was uppermost.

"That woman!" he said to himself, letting Hercules choose his own pace that morning. "That rare, lovely creature! Mrs. Cameron's maid!"

He said it over several times to himself, as though he were feeling for the precise import of the word. It was not an agreeable one to him. Sometimes he resented it, sometimes he was rather pained, and then, but only an instant or two, slightly amused. For admirably as he had borne the test at the moment, it cannot be denied that Miss Day's statement, which he saw had cost her no slight effort to make, had been a shock to him. His pride, the social prejudices in which he had been reared, made themselves felt for a little while. This was not to his credit, but Jack Elderby was not the flawless hero of a novel. It would be too much to say that he was angry with Miss Day. But he did feel that she had done herself, the world at large, he would not say *himself* — a wrong. What could have possessed her! He was provoked at Mrs. Cameron. She should not have permitted such a thing. It was too shocking an incongruity.

It affected young Elderby's imagination a good deal, I suppose, as it would have affected one of Cinderella's lovers, who had seen her radiant in

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loveliness, robed in silks, and shining with jewels at night, and had come across her the next morning in her dingy gown, among her pots and pans.

This comparison did not occur to young Elderby. If it had, he would probably have thrust it away angrily. It did, however, flash across him that the whole thing might be a fad of Miss Day's — a bit of masquerading in which young women daintily reared and with luxurious leisures, might like to indulge as Marie Antoinette played dairy-maid at little Trianon. Then Miss Day's face rose before him, and the quiet scorn in the beautiful eyes rebuked his thought. He had gathered from some remarks she had dropped that her coming to Cameron Brae was a recent matter. Some overwhelming change in her life, he thought, must have induced her to take this step. When he thought of Hester, and how all this would strike her, he winced and jerked the reins sharply.

Then that nobler side of Jack Elderby's nature to which Miss Day had so strongly appealed, regained the ascendency. Less than an hour after they had parted, he had said to himself, his lips under the dark mustache taking what his sister called "their immitigable line," —

"Whatever her position is, whatever her circumstances may be, there she is, the finest, sweetest, noblest thing I ever saw in woman's guise! She did not come to her present position without justifying the matter to herself. What business is it of yours,

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Jack Elderby, to question her acts? It is enough for you that you have found her, and had the grace to recognize the woman, or the angel, she is! I will meet you on your own ground, and you will make a throne of that, whether you are maid or mistress, Marjorie Day!"

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XXII

THE LAST NIGHT AT RED LEDGE

It was a little after midnight when Grace Halifax came to her room. She was to start the next morning with a party, including Mr. and Mrs. Wilmarth, for the White Mountains. A ball had been given at Red Ledge in honor of the departing guests. Grace's beauty had shown resplendent that night. Some feeling had lent an unusual brilliancy to her azure eyes and her lovely complexion. She wore a white brocade with a sea-gray shimmer all over it. There was a mist of soft laces about her arms and her neck, and diamonds flashed among the laces, and a single cluster lit up the golden hair.

Grace's last evening at Red Ledge had been a triumph sufficient, it seemed, to satisfy any woman's vanity. She had been the reigning belle of the ball-room. The accustomed train of admirers had hung about her steps. She had danced and flirted with unusual animation, her style having grown, of late years, a little statuesque. But despite all her beauty and her triumphs, it was not a happy woman who threw herself into an easy-chair and curtly dismissed

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her maid. A cloud darkened over her face as soon as she was alone. Her feeling was a complex one, but underlying everything else was a pain at her heart — the sharpest which Grace Halifax had ever experienced.

She was a good deal bewildered too. The thing seemed inconceivable; it was terribly galling to her vanity, yet it had been forced upon her conviction, that Jack Elderby, the only man for whom she really cared, had no intention of proposing to her.

She had taken it for granted that he was destined to do this. It was not strange. Her beauty had been like a spell enthralling the hearts and senses of so many men that she naturally regarded it as irresistible. She had all a woman's acuteness where her own affairs were concerned, and she understood perfectly Hester Wilmarth's motive in inviting her to Red Ledge. The fact that Jack had not played the usual *rôle* of her admirers, but had carried himself in the frank, easy fashion of their old boy-and-girl days had pleased her. It was a refreshing contrast to the others. She knew him well enough not to doubt that when the time came, he would prove himself sufficiently ardent. Meantime, having made up her mind to accept him, after a struggle which her ambitions and certain family influences had intensified, she was in no hurry to bring matters to a conclusion. Admiration was sweet incense to her. Flirtations had become a kind of second nature. She

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had a feeling that these were her last days of freedom, and she must make the most of them. Some foreign attachés in her train at Red Ledge, as well as numerous specimens of the native American, had, during her visit, hung constantly about her. So the time had slipped away in all sorts of festivities and flirtations. But Grace, now the end had come, dressed herself for the grand ball with a feeling that her fate would be decided before she returned to her room that night. She began to wonder in a vague way why Jack had not spoken before this time. It must be her own fault, she reasoned. She had been so absorbed with people and all sorts of gayeties, that she had not given him a fair chance. He was not like other men, — thank Heaven, — ready to fall down at a woman's feet with a glance or a smile. Possibly he had been jealous of some of this foreign and domestic breed hanging about her. There was no telling when he could join them at the White Mountains with that tiresome lawsuit keeping him in Boston. Grace's heart, what she possessed of that organ, grew tender. She went to the ball resolved that Jack Elderby should have his chance that night.

It came late in the evening. Grace had returned from the supper-room, when Jack, with whom she had danced hours before, came to speak with her, and her escort, taking the hint, bowed himself away.

Grace seized her opportunity.

"Jack," she said, "this heat and crush are insuffer-

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able. Do get me out of them into some freshness and quietness, unless you want to see me vanish into thin air."

Jack looked at the beautiful blond creature on whose snowy neck the diamonds blazed. "Don't," he said, "turn me to stone by suggesting such a tragic close to your triumphs! I should have come to you before this time and paid my homage to the Queen of the ballroom, only it seemed a rather ungracious act to elbow my way through her circle of courtiers."

"Jack Elderby," the tone at least implied petulance, "that is the first perfectly silly speech I ever heard from your lips. I expect just that kind of absurdity from the creatures about me; but I was not prepared for it from you."

"Did I quite deserve that, Grace?" The voice was half chaffing, half serious, as the tall, broad-shouldered young man and the beautiful woman made their way slowly, the centre of all eyes, through the crowd. "Hasn't a fellow a right to speak the truth occasionally to his old playmate, even if it does echo the general sentiment?"

"No." Grace's negative was more decided than the occasion seemed to demand. "Your crowning merit in my eyes, at least, has been that you were original. You are the one man I won't have harping on that worn-out string."

They met Mrs. Wilmarth with a party of friends.

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Her satin dress of an old rose tint, with some plumes of the same shade in her hair, brought out her dark, brilliant style to perfection. She nodded to the pair. Grace noticed a peculiar look in her friend's eyes as they met her own. "One might almost fancy there was something like regret or pity in the passing glance. But that of course was absurd."

It was no easy thing to find the seclusion Miss Halifax desired, but Mr. Elderby finally succeeded. They emerged into a small balcony that opened out of the supper-room, which was now almost emptied, as the cotillon was forming. The balcony was hung with vines through which the moonlight came in silver flecks and broken gleams. The dew-wet flowers below sent up wafts of fragrance. At one end the great vine-curtain parted, and through the opening one had a view of the night, with its wide stillness and beauty, with its white moonshine, and its far, solemn stars.

"Oh, this is delicious!" exclaimed Grace, and the two stood still and drank in the stillness and fragrance.

She looked at the tall, manly figure at her side — all its movements expressing a kind of vigorous ease.

"What was there," she wondered, half critically, half tenderly, "which made this man so much more interesting than others, and gave him such a power over her?" She meant to promise her hand to him

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to-night; but she was going to do it with her eyes open, with a strong sense of all she was conferring on him. She pitied herself a little too, thinking of offers which had been, of others which might be. "But what was the use! Other men might bring her vastly more in wealth and honors, but the men would not be Jack Elderby!"

"What an infinite sarcasm this is on all which is going on inside there!"

Jack wondered at himself the next moment for making such a speech to Grace Halifax. But her answer was in keeping.

"I know it, Jack. I am mortally tired of this thing. I wish we might have the rest of the evening to ourselves."

Was that the faintest little sigh he heard?

"I suspect you are getting bored with Red Ledge after a month's experience of it. You want fresh fields and pastures new."

The tone was light enough, but it concealed a shade of uneasiness.

"Oh, no!" responded Grace quickly. "It is not Red Ledge, Jack. I — I rather think it is going away from it. Upon my soul, I wish this trip to the White Mountains had never been suggested!"

Jack laughed. Did she detect a shade of embarrassment in the ring? When it came to a proposal Grace had never found it necessary to take the initiative. In a moment Jack was saying, —

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"But it will prove for you an agreeable change of places and people. The moonlight will work grander effects with those old mountains than it can have a a chance for at Red Ledge. Then the new admirers on the scene — a matter of course where you are, Grace — will at least have the zest of novelty!"

"Moonshine and admirers!" with a little contemptuous toss of her head. Her heart was going a good deal like a girl's who is expecting her first offer, and finds the tremor delicious, though it is a little trying withal. "As though I cared a fig for all that stuff! I was thinking of my old friend, and how I should miss the talk and the fun, and all our happy times together. It is because you and I must part to-morrow," — there was a tender thrill in her voice, a soft, swift glance from under the golden lashes, — "that I am sorry to go to the mountains, Jack Elderby!"

It was the cruellest moment of his life. He could not mistake the meaning of tone and look and speech. It gave him a new sense of Grace's feeling for himself, to find the proud woman could condescend so far. But it was his man's duty to protect her from herself, and any gratified vanity was merged now in sympathy for his companion.

"I shall miss you and Hester immensely," he said, with the old, frank, tone, "after being at the mercy of such a brace as you two for the last weeks! I don't see how I am to get on without you, but I am the victim of fate, the bond slave of law!"

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A few moments later the two re-entered the ball-room. For the rest of the evening Miss Halifax carried everything before her. She had never been in such wild gayety of spirits, and never had she seemed so superbly beautiful, her lovers vowed, as on that last night at Red Ledge.

But in her own room she recalled the triumphs with a smile of bitter disdain. They seemed only to mock her with that which she had missed. It was true that Grace Halifax would never break her heart for any man. Perhaps her pride was stung almost as much as her affections were wounded. It was impossible, she thought, that Jack Elderby should not have understood. He would know all his life that she, Grace Halifax, had tried, — she could not finish, even to herself! She sprang up, and went to her mirror, and surveyed herself in all her jewels and laces. Her beauty, enhanced by her excitement, shone on her splendidly.

"I don't believe in you!" she cried out passionately. "I hate you since you could not give me the thing I most wanted!"

Then she turned and paced about her room, a fierce bitterness in her heart toward Jack Elderby for one moment, and the next, the old habit of liking contending with, and triumphing over, every other feeling. Occasionally a thought flashed across her that some other woman might stand in the way; but she put it by as impossible.

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Then she remembered the look in Hester Wilmarth's eyes. She understood it now. Grace's pride rose in arms. "To think of Hester's pitying her! Jack Elderby," she told herself, "had no more heart than a marble statue! She had been a fool for romancing over him. She was glad she was going away from Red Ledge to-morrow, glad the ocean would be between them in a little while."

It was evident that the ambitions which had been partly held in check would resume their full sway now. Yet, it was none the less true that Jack Elderby would be the one romance of Grace Halifax's life. Some strain of music, some poem or story, would touch her for a moment; she would remember when she sat by the window, and the tears were on her hands, as she saw the early summer dawn rise over the hills about Red Ledge.

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XXIII

DONIL KEMP'S FIRST PRAYER

On the night of the grand ball at Red Ledge a small, lithe, shabby figure might have been seen making its way, alert and stealthy as a wild animal, among the thick undergrowth which bordered Moose Falls. At last, with a leap, the figure emerged into the moonlight, and stood motionless as a piece of bronze sculpture, just below the middle cascade. It was Donil Kemp. The full moon looked down on him from among her stars, and the waters sang to the moon. After a minute or two Donil stared, eager and grave, up and down the narrow, sinuous waterway. The boy's eyes, keen as an Indian's, took in every feature of a scene which, familiar enough in the daylight, was strangely transfigured and glorified by the moonshine. He saw the great, shining drifts, the sheen of thinned currents, smooth as gauze, where they flowed over side bowlders, and the vast, glittering volume of white waters as they came combing and leaping over the terraces. The sight of those tumbling masses, their voices, grown into a thunderous pæan in the stillness, stirred his

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young, half-pagan imagination, and he was strangely awed and impressed.

Donil had come here to-night with a purpose. Since he last saw Miss Day her words had been echoing in his brain and heart, —

"You must try and tell God yourself, Donil."

At first he shrank from the attempt. It was all so strange and new to him, so out of the line of his previous ideas and habits! Still, as the days passed, and he pondered the matter in his dumb little soul, a longing grew to "jest go and say somethin' all on his own hook."

He had a confused feeling that the common daylight was not the time to carry out his purpose. Of course, he could not have put it in words, but his imagination craved something dim and remote and solemn, for this first devotion of his life.

That summer night, lying wide-awake, in his low loft, he had seen the great moon, looking in at his square bit of window, as though she had something to say to him. Then it flashed across him that she would tell him, if a moon could speak, that this was his time.

In a few minutes Donil was out of the loft-window. He slipped down the side of the house, swift and stealthy as a cat; he started for Moose Falls; he went straight to the place where he sat with Marjorie when she held his hand, and he listened to her prayer. He had a vague feeling that God might be

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more inclined to listen to him if he addressed Him from this spot. It never entered the boy's mind, as it might a poet's, that the banks were the walls of God's cathedral, and the singing waters were His choir.

Suddenly, half involuntarily, Donil threw himself on his knees. Was this act something transmitted from the reverent habit of unknown ancestors, or did the boy act from the same impulse which causes the young pagan to prostrate himself before his idol? At any rate, after the first words, he did not have to stop and stumble and choose. They came of themselves: —

"O God, up there ahint the stars and the moon, I've got su'thin' I want to say to You, and *she* said I ough' ter try. You must 'a' heern *her* if You can hear anything. But I can't use such fine words as *hern*, and I hope no offence 'll be took.

"You're so big an' powerful it makes a feller kind o' skeery to think of talkin' straight to You. It seems as though it would be kind o' easier if there was suth'in' to hear and see. I've been a-thinkin' a great deal about You since I knowed; and I can't tell You how good it would seem to feel cert'in and sure You was jest like what *she* said, and thought on me and cared for me, though I wasn't nothin' but jest Donil Kemp with no good clo'es to my name, and used to kickin's and cussin's for my share.

"I hain't been a good boy, — I knowed it! I've

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been all fired mad at times, and done a many things I'm sorry for. I didn't knowed about You then, an' it's mighty hard for a feller to keep a-tryin' when there's nobody to care for him, and things goes rough; but I'd like to please You, — yes, sir'ee, I would. I mean to try to be good, leastwise, if You'll help me. It'll come hard though, to hold in my temper when Matt sets out to rile me. But if a feller can know You set as much store by him as You do by them as has nice homes and fathers and mothers to look out for 'em, an' a good time gin'rally, it makes a mighty diff'rence with him, it does and so!

"What I want to feel is, I ain't left out in the cold; but I'm Your boy, as much as the rest on 'em. That 'll do me heaps o' good.

"Now, if You're a-hearin', and *she* said I must b'lieve You was, You'll think this is a slim kind of a prayer; but I hope You'll say, —

"'It's jest Donil Kemp, and he's said the best he knowed how, and he's spoke from his heart, and I'm goin' to take it for what he meant.'"

Donil rose slowly with a great awe and relief filling his soul, and came out into the full moonlight. He looked up the long, shining waterway, and again the cascade tossed and sparkled and sang before him. Something for which he could not have found words, if he had died for them, filled his heart and imagination. Suddenly he burst into a great sobbing, but

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he was not unhappy. He cried for a long time in a loud, passionate way, as a boy does who does not weep often, and whose heart is full. It always seemed to him afterward that some loneliness and hardness went out of his heart on those sobs, and never came back.

Then at last he grew quiet and tired; he went up among some old pines which grew tall on a slope of the bank. He threw himself down on a fragrant bed of pine needles, the long, deep shadows flecked and silvered by the moonshine. He soon fell asleep to the sighing of the winds overhead, and the singing of the waters below. The moon came at last and looked into the shadowy gloom, and her beams touched the rough little head tenderly. The boy had passed many a night out-doors, and preferred it to the low, stifling loft. There was nobody to miss Donil Kemp.

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XXIV

TWO NEW FIGURES ON THE SCENE

THERE was company at Cameron Brae. Mrs. Oswald Earle had appeared unexpectedly on the scene. Her little son — a handsome child of six — accompanied her. She had, to quote her own expression, "braved the lion in his den." This was a figurative way of stating that she had coolly planted herself on Mrs. Cameron's hospitality. The lady had received her guest with a rather perfunctory graciousness. She had always regarded her cousin Oswald Earle as a good deal of a *flaneur* at best. But his wife had taken her hostess by storm, and was bent on making herself agreeable. The ladies had met only a few times, but, after the ice was broken, they got on well together. Mrs. Earle was a bright woman in a surface way. She had a smart, gossipy style of talk, which made her agreeable to people who liked to be amused, and were not above enjoying their neighbors' faults, when they were shown up in exaggerated lights, which really amounted to caricature. Mrs. Earle was in her early forties. She was a tallish, rather sallow-complexioned woman, with bright eyes

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and regular features. She prided herself on her figure and carriage, which people in her own set called "stylish."

Mrs. Oswald Earle's marriage had, in the end, greatly disappointed her pride and ambitions. She was secretly chagrined and embittered against fate. Her husband, indolent, self-indulgent, reckless, had run through with his own considerable patrimony, and her smaller one necessitated constant economies. Mrs. Earle was not a woman to sit calmly under adverse fortunes. She had many times gone over the list of her own and her husband's family relatives, with a view to their present and prospective availability. She had decided that her husband's cousin, Mrs. Angus Cameron, the wealthy, childless, secluded invalid, afforded the strongest inducements for cultivating an intimacy. If nothing more came of it, she might remember her relatives in her will.

With these motives Mrs. Earle appeared with her son at Cameron Brae.

The day following her arrival she met Marjorie for the first time. Mrs. Cameron presented the two. She had previously explained Miss Day's relations to herself, going into these with some details, and giving her cousin to understand that the young person, while accepting her position for a time, was undoubtedly a lady in all her habits and feelings, and should always be treated with courtesy.

Mrs. Earle had listened and assented with what

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grace she could. But she was inwardly annoyed, and had conceived a dislike to Marjorie before they met.

There was nothing to find fault with in the new guest's manner. Mrs. Earle's cue was to conciliate Mrs. Cameron at all costs. But when the dark, keen eyes searched Marjorie's face, the owner was saying to herself, —

"Despite all those fine looks and ways, you are only a servant, and I intend to make you feel it, too, before I get through with you."

Of course it would have been impossible for Mrs. Earle to conceive of the motives which had brought Marjorie to Cameron Brae. The two lived in moral atmospheres, as far apart as the poles. But to that instinctive dislike which a narrow nature is apt to feel for any standards and ideas foreign to its own, was added a personal feeling which swiftly took the alarm. The young woman stood in Mrs. Earle's way. This feeling having once entered her mind, was naturally strengthened by all her observations, keenly on the alert. She was soon satisfied that Marjorie's motives in coming to Cameron Brae were patent as the daylight.

"She meant to become a necessity to Mrs. Cameron, wheedle herself into the rich, lonely woman's regard, secure a powerful influence over her in all ways, and, in the end, feather her own nest handsomely."

Mrs. Earle regarded this in the light of a wrong to herself. Marjorie's personal attractions — the lack

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of assumption, the inborn *ladyhood*, which could never have been the disguise of an artful or vulgar nature — were only an added offence in Mrs. Earle's eyes. She soon came to regard Miss Day in the light of a subtle and dangerous enemy, and resolved to spare no effort to circumvent her.

Marjorie's instincts afforded her more or less consciousness of this. She feared, however, lest she should do injustice to Mrs. Earle, because she had, from the beginning, instinctively distrusted her. Fortunately, they did not often meet, except in Mrs. Cameron's presence, where Mrs. Earle was under a strong necessity to mask her feelings.

Still, in one way or another, these would crop out — in an occasional stare, in a disdainful tone, in haughty reserves and silences, which the circumstances accented — in those thousand impalpable ways in which a woman of the world can embarrass or annoy one of her sex. Mrs. Earle, was, however, so much on her guard that Mrs. Cameron, who probably was not quite so unconscious as she appeared, found nothing to warrant her interference.

The elder woman, too, may not have been altogether unwilling that Miss Day should occasionally be reminded of her own position, in a way for which she herself was altogether irresponsible. She had treated the younger with unprecedented consideration. But her traditions and prejudices were certain to make themselves felt at times. She was not unlikely to

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chafe at being under obligations "to treat one's maid, or whatever she might be — still one who served her — as an equal."

Mrs. Earle was, meanwhile, doing her best to be agreeable to the mistress of Cameron Brae, and on the whole succeeding. She amused and interested her hostess. She brought into her seclusion an echo of that gay world which had been Mrs. Cameron's native air. She related stories, events, gossip, with a bright, piquant touch. She brought vividly back to the elder woman people whom she had known, and retailed in a graphic, satirical way, incidents of thier later years.

All this was probably more interesting to the listener than if her guest's talk had been restrained by a larger nature, or a kindlier temper.

Mrs. Earle, in short, made it a point to study Mrs. Cameron's tastes, weaknesses, prejudices, and was facile in adapting herself to them. The beautiful boy, with his charming ways and prattle, unconsciously supplemented his mother's efforts. He was the first child Mrs. Cameron had consented to have about her since her own boy died.

Marjorie was brought little in contact with Mrs. Earle, except when she joined the ladies at lunch and dinner. She had even more time to herself than before. The new guest passed the evenings with "cousin Gertrude," as she rather ostentatiously called Mrs. Cameron.

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But Marjorie did not gain much by the larger leisures. There was some subtle antagonism in the atmosphere which she could but associate with Mrs. Earle. She forced herself not to dwell on this, but is was impossible to blind herself to the import of certain glances, tones, speeches. She told herself she would not let this woman invade her atmosphere, be a constant irritating and discordant element in her life. But Mrs. Earle had her own ways of forcing her to perceive and feel.

It seemed to Marjorie, too, although she tried to disguise this from herself, there was some subtle change in Mrs. Cameron's manner toward herself — a slight aloofness — a touch of imperiousness.

Then she would suddenly change as with some afterthought and be doubly gracious.

Marjorie would have had the solution of all this in a conversation which reflected, more or less, the spirit of several others, between Mrs. Cameron and her guest.

"Cousin Gertrude," exclaimed Mrs. Earle one morning, as the two sat together before lunch, "it may be the most precious boon in the world, but I should find it insufferable to have a spick-and-span lady like Miss Day for my maid! She is really that, I suppose, however we may disguise the fact by some agreeable euphemism. I should fail in my *rôle*. I could not be always on my guard — could not always treat a person who was essentially a

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servant, and taking her servant's wages, as I would a guest in my drawing-room. I should prefer to go to the other extreme, and have somebody about me who could not read or write!"

The speech had, for the moment, its effect.

"I have tried both kinds, Elinor," replied Mrs. Cameron in a tone of languid resignation, and she slipped the rings about her fingers; "I prefer the lady, whatever drawbacks there may be in her case, to the coarser species." She shivered a little.

"I quite understand your feeling;" Mrs. Earle's voice took a note of sympathy. "But you must pardon me for saying that Miss Day seems to exact the utmost for one in her position. That is always the way with her kind."

"I think you are mistaken, Elinor." Mrs. Cameron's voice showed Mrs. Earle she had gone quite far enough. "Miss Day has never exacted anything. That would be unlikely, in our relations. But it is only justice to say that she does not belong to the class of waiting maids, though she is my attendant. I know nothing of her past, beyond what Dr. Amoury has related. But I can also form my own conclusions. Her friends do not know where she is, and, if they did, would leave no stone unturned to get her away, which would be doing me a special disfavor."

Mrs. Earle was voluble in promises of absolute secrecy, and the appearance of Algernon on the

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scene, full of excitement over a chipmunk on the stonewall coping, was an agreeable diversion.

Mrs. Earle made up her mind that any attempt to undermine Miss Day would require much adroitness, or she would be hoist with her own petard. If it should come to a question of losing her maid or dispensing with Mrs. Earle's friendship, it was evident Mrs. Cameron would not hesitate.

An event soon occurred which satisfied Marjorie that her instincts regarding Mrs. Earle had not been at fault. One morning, after she had finished her services with Mrs. Cameron, she went into the grounds. She enjoyed the gray sky and landscape. It was shadowy and spectral, like one of Corot's pictures. A wide, cool mist clung to the air. Low clouds of opaque gray brooded over the earth; the south wind had a faint sob, as though it had come a far way and the wings were wearied, which brought the promise of rain.

The brooding stillness, the gray tints, the mystery of the softly moving mists, were grateful after the days of bright sunshine and sapphire skies. Marjorie was moving about, a rather spectral figure herself, enjoying the neutral colors, the hush and brooding of nature, when she was suddenly startled by a shout, and a moment later, Algernon Earle came bounding and panting toward her. He was beautiful as a cherub, with his long, golden curls, his eyes blue as violets, and the rose-bloom of childhood in

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his cheeks. He was frank and affectionate, and had taken an immense liking to Marjorie, who had told him stories when they walked together in the grounds.

Algernon was evidently under some strong excitement. His little chest heaved for a few moments before he buried his shining head in the folds of her dress. Then he looked up with reddened cheeks and angry eyes, and broke out, —

"Say, you aren't a servant — you aren't, are you?"

"Who told you I was, Algernon?"

Marjorie's voice was quiet enough, but there was a poise of the head, a slight sharpness in the sibilants, which only those who knew her well would have detected.

"My mamma says you are! She said it just now!" panted the indignant child. "We stood on the piazza; we had been looking at you walking around here. I wanted my boot laced and my sash had got untied. I asked her please to fix them for me, and she said I was a careless boy and I must ask a servant to do it.

"But I didn't see any around and told her so, and then I called her a lazy, naughty mamma!

"'But,' she said, 'there is a servant in the grounds, and you can go to her if you like. It is Miss Day.'

"I told her you weren't a servant — you were a lady.

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"'Oh, yes,' she said, 'with all those fine airs and soft ways, which have made you like her, and wheedled you, as they have others, she is only a servant.'

"I was mad then," continued the spoiled child, and his cheeks flushed and his eyes blazed again, "and I stamped at her hard, and I said 'it wasn't so, and you were a truly lady.'"

It was all told swiftly, in the rapid, indignant soprano of six years. It would hardly have been possible to check the child, even had Marjorie thought of doing it. She had listened with a doubt lest the conclusion would not give a different complexion to the whole story.

The angry blood scorched her cheek. There was a tumult of bitterness and rage in her heart. Her mistrust had been right. This woman was her enemy!

But there was Algernon looking up at her with his eager, perplexed face. The sight appealed to Marjorie's nobler self, and, after a little, quieted the tumult within her.

"Algernon, come with me," said the calm, sweet voice the child had grown to love. She led him to a tiny arbor whose rustic sides and roof were smothered in vines. She seated him on a bench, and then, bending down, she carefully laced the boot and tied the loosened sash, while he watched her silently with curious eyes.

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At last she took him on her knee, smiled into his face a moment, and then spoke, —

"I think you told me, Algernon, that your nurse had taught you German. Do you know what '*Ich dien*' means?"

"Oh, yes!" lisped the childish voice. "It means 'I serve.'"

"Yes, dear; I am glad you remember. Those are very noble words — so noble that some of the grandest men who ever lived have chosen them for their motto through life. They have carried those words on their silken banners, and on their glittering arms, into terrible battles. They have tried to live the words, too, in great troubles, and wrongs, and sorrows, which it would make your heart sad to hear about. Indeed, nobody can be really great, no matter how proud and lofty he may feel, who does not want to do good, to serve others. Do you see what I mean?"

The boy had been drinking in every syllable. The bright eyes grew grave. The little head drooped and nestled against her shoulder.

"Yes, I know," he said softly. And then he was silent, and Marjorie listened to the low breathing, and wondered what was going on under the golden mesh of hair against her shoulder.

"Was that, Miss Day, why you laced my boot and tied my sash?" he asked in a low, grave voice.

"Because I was glad to serve you? Yes, Algernon. Wouldn't you have done the same for me?"

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His face drooped serious again. She saw him run his small fingers meditatively through his curls, in a way that was bewitching. Then, as though a new thought had struck him, he bounded from her lap, and rushed out of the arbor.

In three minutes he returned, his small hands full of purple and yellow plums, he had gathered under some small fruit trees near at hand. He laid the fruit in her lap, his whole face flushed and shining.

"*Ich dien!*" he said softly.

Marjorie caught him in her arms and half smothered him with kisses. She felt at that moment she could forgive his mother.

But once, while they ate the plums together, Algernon paused and looked up gravely.

"But that was not what mamma meant! She meant servants, like the cook, and the coachman, and the housemaid. You are not like them," very decidedly.

Marjorie looked at him with eyes whose pathos he could not understand.

"Why had God sent this rare and beautiful child to that selfish, malicious woman to rear and mould, after her own kind?"

And the gray silence about her did not answer.

Then she said, "Well, Algernon, we will not think about it any more. We will just think what a good time you and I are having here in the arbor. Hark! Do you hear those drops? It is beginning to rain."

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XXV

SHE TOLD HIM HERSELF

Two days later Jack Elderby appeared once more at Cameron Brae. He had left Red Ledge with his sister, Miss Halifax, and their party, and accompanied them to Boston, where they were joined by Mr. Wilmarth, for the trip to the White Mountains. Jack remained in the city to confer with some of his clientele, as his firm had important cases on the docket for the autumn.

Grace carried off the parting at the station admirably. No one would have suspected from her gay manner that a ripple of emotion had disturbed her slumbers the night before. She had her strong pride, her strength of youth and health, to tide her over a disappointment.

Jack went through with his part perfectly. His adieus were made in the old gay, cordial manner to his sister and his friend. But I think that he and Grace Halifax had a sense of relief when the train rolled out of the Lowell station.

Since their memorable talk, Mrs. Wilmarth had treated her brother with a good deal of coolness, which

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he had thought it wisest to ignore. She understood that Jack intended, after professional business was well in hand, to join some friends at their lodge in the Adirondack wilderness for a week or two of hunting and fishing and general return to primeval ways. But Jack discovered after his return to Boston that the Adirondack programme had lost its attractiveness. His thoughts, his memories, recurred with obstinate persistence to Old Lanes. They hovered about Cameron Brae; they haunted Moose Falls. A face with a luminous darkness in eyes whose shade was perpetually tantalizing and evading him — eyes which had the rich brown of agate, the clear depth of sea-gray, glimmered before him. When he thought of those sensitive lines, of the perfect moulding of chin and brow, of the lips with their manifold expressiveness, the seriousness, the archness, melting so quickly one into the other, all other faces lost something in fineness or charm. What Marjorie Day had, with a struggle, confessed to young Elderby only, in the end, deepened his interest. She had a charm of mystery, of romance, for his imagination. When he recalled that joyous laugh, Miss Day seemed the last woman in the world to pity. A queen whom Fate had discrowned might carry herself with just that royal air, Jack said to himself in rather a romancing vein, as he remembered the poise of the beautiful head when she spoke the word which had so stunned him.

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At first he had a slight and wholly unjust grudge against Mrs. Cameron; but he had got over that, of late, by reflecting that it was to her he owed his acquaintance with Miss Day.

Jack found the days getting unendurable. It was all well enough when he was absorbed in professional work, but the moment this was relaxed, and he found time to look about him, things seemed to have lost their zest. He laid it to the heat and the dulness of the city in August. He thought over the seaside hotels, cool and delightful, within easy reach, after the day's work was done, but they failed to allure him. Dick Wilmarth had induced his brother-in-law to sleep at the house on Commonwealth Avenue during the family absence. Jack told himself the elegant, empty Wilmarth mansion was about as enlivening as the catacombs.

In less than two weeks he began to ponder seriously a return to Red Ledge. It was only three hours from Boston. He could take rooms at the hotel, run over to the city two or three times a week, and keep himself in working harness. Some of his cases proved more knotty than he had anticipated.

One morning Jack Elderby sat in the drawing-room at Cameron Brae. He had come to Red Ledge the day before. He glanced toward the door more than once, expecting the entrance of a tall, slender figure, in white or gray draperies, and a face whose loveli-

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ness had glimmered before his days and haunted his dreams.

Meanwhile, a rapid conversation was going on in Mrs. Cameron's room. Mrs. Earle was with her cousin. The latter had spoken with evident pleasure of the visit of her old friend's son, and showed unusual interest when she talked of the young man.

Mrs. Earle's curiosity was alert. The name of Elderby was a passport to her favor, but there was something behind this. When a young man was in question, she was always ready for a flirtation, with, of course, a due regard for the proprieties. It was her private conviction that whatever she had lost in youth was more than made up for in womanly *finesse* and a larger acquaintance with masculine nature.

She glanced at the mirror. It threw back an agreeable reflection. In her freshly made toilet, with her becoming morning dress, some soft fabric in a pale shade of yellow, brightened and bordered with gold trimmings, she was looking her best.

"I will go down, Gertrude dear, and take your message," she said. "I saw Miss Day go into the grounds not long ago. She will see Mr. Elderby, of course, if he remains longer than to inquire after your health."

Mrs. Cameron sent her compliments by her cousin, and an invitation to Mr. Elderby for lunch. Mrs. Earle had managed so adroitly with mistress and servants that Miss Day was not informed of the young man's appearance.

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It was a gracious and attractive woman who entered the drawing-room and greeted Mr. Elderby, introducing herself as Mrs. Cameron's cousin and guest. But she was not the one for whose appearance he had been on the *qui vive*. He was, of course, too much a man of the world to show his disappointment. Mrs. Earle was bent on charming Mr. Elderby. Despite his first disappointment, she succeeded, during the next half-hour, in making an agreeable impression. The talk, which was at first confined to Mrs. Cameron, branched off to other topics. Living in Boston, the two had mutual acquaintances. Though the Elderby and Earle sets were distinct, their social orbits touched occasionally. The lady felt she had secured the prize to herself for this call, and was lavish of smiles, glances, and that bright feminine talk which always amuses a man.

It helped to pass the half-hour pleasantly, but all the while Jack was growing impatient for Miss Day's appearance. She had never allowed him to wait long. At last, in a pause of the talk, he inquired if she were at home.

Mrs. Earle's chance had come. Her eyes had a flash of malice — swiftly suppressed — but the visitor had caught it.

"Miss Day!" she repeated the name a little doubtfully. "Oh, yes. She is with Algernon — my little boy — in the grounds. You are speaking, Mr. Elderby, of my cousin's maid, I believe. One

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would hardly suspect, without being told, Miss Day's real position."

There was a steely glitter in Jack's eyes.

"It is no news to me, however, as Miss Day told me herself. I was surprised she should think it of consequence enough to do that."

Mrs. Earle's astonishment threw her off her guard.

"Miss Day told you herself?" she repeated.

"Yes," said Jack, with the grand air he could assume on occasion. "When one sees such a woman as Miss Day, one feels how absolutely unimportant a mere position may be, because of what she is herself."

Jack did not remain to lunch. The conversation dragged a little afterward. Mrs. Earle felt slightly uneasy under the regard of those dark, penetrating eyes. Once it flashed across her that young Elderby might possibly be in love with Miss Day.

After Mr. Elderby had made his adieux, Mrs. Earle went up-stairs, saying in an amazed undertone, — "She told him herself! She told him herself! That was what he said."

She began to feel there was something in Miss Day which she had not yet fathomed.

Jack Elderby, riding over the old hillroads in the hot noon, a good deal disappointed, said to himself, —

"That woman is Marjorie Day's enemy! If she were mine, I could forgive her."

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XXVI

FOREDOOMED TO A TITLE

On the morning when Jack Elderby rode over to Cameron Brae, his sister in her room at the Profile House, tossed on the table, with an air of disgust, a letter her husband had just brought her. They were about to drive to Bethlehem. The lady gathered her shawl around her, and resumed her parasol with an air. Her husband knew the signs.

"What's up now?" he asked, shaking an ash-flake from his cigar. Hester was always indulgent about his smoking.

"It's from Jack," in a tone of decided disapproval. "He writes he has given up all that Adirondack junketing at the last moment, and gone back to Red Ledge. Business, he says, makes it indispensable he should be within easy reach of the city, and he can run to and fro several times a week, and have his fill of fresh air and green earth, like other happy mortals. It all seems to me very absurd, returning there again, when we are all gone; but Jack Elderby must have his own way, if the heavens fall!"

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"It must be deucedly dull for him just now in Boston," rejoined Wilmarth, taking mild puffs at his cigar. "Everybody gone, and that big house about as cheerful as a sepulchre! But the Adirondack fellows will be awfully cut up at his backing out in this fashion. They'd counted on him for the next fortnight's shindy."

"I could have told them, if they had counted on Jack Elderby, they had counted without their host." Mrs. Wilmarth's brow wore a cloud under a very becoming hat. "What is there left now to interest him at Red Ledge! Then that long ride on the cars two or three times a week!"

Hester had not forgiven her brother for the disappointment he had given her dearest ambitions. She had no special cause for disliking his present move, only it suited her just now to find fault with whatever he did.

"Curious," said Wilmarth, "he should take that long trip, instead of finding a place nearer home. Isn't it possible there may be a woman in the case?"

"O Dick, that is the absurdest of all conjectures!"

"I don't see why in the nature of things. Jack is a capital fellow. You know I'm fond of him. I suppose he, like most other Jacks, will want his Jill one of these days."

Mrs. Wilmarth thought her husband's jokes seldom

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had any *raison d'être.* But she answered now with a vigor which surprised him.

"If he does find one, I devoutly hope she will jilt him. That will be the proper Nemesis."

"What do you mean, Hester? I have observed Jack was rather out of your good books of late."

"I mean precisely what I said. One thing you may rest sure of, however. No woman is at the bottom of Jack Elderby's going back to Red Ledge. What did he care for that whole kit of charmers who set their caps for him! But there comes the carriage. It is high time we were off, Dick."

Descending the staircase, they met Grace Halifax, who was just going out for a row on the lake in the perfect mountain morning. She was as dazzlingly beautiful as ever. The triumphs of Red Ledge had been repeated at the Profile. The two women accosted each other with smiles. Jack's name was, for the most part, tacitly avoided between them. It galled Grace's pride that Hester should know the invitation to Red Ledge had been a failure. Though the old cordiality of manner was still kept up between them, it would, no doubt, be some relief to both women when they parted.

"Grace looked stunning this morning!" said Wilmarth, as he took the reins from the hostler. "She will make fresh havoc with men's hearts before night."

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"It will never come to anything but havoc though," said Mrs. Wilmarth gloomily. "Grace is to sail in two months. Lady Ambleton will have it all her own way then, and Grace is foredoomed to a title!"

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XXVII

MISS DAY AND DONIL KEMP ARE IN THEIR TURN SURPRISED

Two days later Marjorie Day sat again in the green gloom of the little nook under the pine-tree, which watched the cascade at Moose Falls. The waters, swollen in volume by the recent showers, tumbled full of iridescent gleam and flashes over the terrace. Sometimes the whole took the hues of an immense opal. Fresh streamlets threaded and sparkled among the bowlders, or, caught among the rocks, were torn and shredded into glittering trails and filmy folds, light and fine as the texture of cobwebs.

But the young woman, sitting in that cool, green dusk, was not thinking of the picture which the leaping waters and the lichened rocks were making about her. For the first time Moose Falls shone and sang in vain to Marjorie Day. For the first time, too, since she came to Old Lanes, she was in a thoroughly depressed mood. She did not know how she had wandered into its gloom and chill; but they were all about her, like a gray fog, choking the air, drown-

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ing the sunshine. Her will had slackened from the tension at which she had held it all this time. She was lonely and homesick. Her heart hungered for the sight of familiar faces, the sound of familiar voices. The reasons which had brought her to Old Lanes, and which had held her so bravely to her service, began to look doubtful, uncertain, and inadequate. Were the habits, the human loves and companionships, to be lightly set aside? Had she a right, she was asking herself, to trust her own impulses so absolutely, to go her own ways so imperiously? Could she justify her act in the end by any real benefit to herself, any service to another?

And in answer to this question, Donil Kemp's rough head and scrubby figure rose before Marjorie. It was like a sun-burst through her gloom. *There* was something tangible to cling to, something to hope for. She meant that boy should be rescued from poverty, ignorance, and wretchedness, and that his future should be something altogether different, because she had come this summer to Old Lanes.

When we are under the dominion of our moods, we seldom analyze them. Marjorie was not conscious how much Mrs. Earle was responsible for hers. She would probably have resented the idea had it occurred to her.

For by this time all her perplexity regarding the real character of Mrs. Cameron's cousin's wife were solved. She read the shallow nature, the petty

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malice under all the masks of good looks and gracious manners.

But while Marjorie gauged the woman so truly, it was still in her enemy's power to make her days uncomfortable in ways which, without experience, she would not have conceived possible. Mrs. Earle's presence pervaded the atmosphere like some subtle, hostile element. She was less on her guard with the housekeeper and the servants than she was with Mrs. Cameron, and she had her own methods of making them understand that she regarded Miss Day as on an entirely distinct footing from herself. It had galled Mrs. Earle to perceive that "these people," influenced partly by the mistress, and partly, no doubt, by Miss Day's personality, treated her with every courtesy which they showed Mrs. Cameron's guest.

Marjorie had more than once surprised a hostile gleam in Mrs. Earle's eyes when they were regarding her. This was mingled of late with a curious perplexity, as though she were trying to fathom something in the young woman which baffled her.

Marjorie had seen this for the first time at lunch, when she learned of Mr. Elderby's call that morning. Mrs. Cameron expressed some surprise that Miss Day had not seen him, as he had inquired for her. She thought there must have been some inadvertence on the servant's part.

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But Marjorie caught an exultant flash in Mrs. Earle's eyes which said plainly as words could, —

"I have stolen a march on you this time!"

During the remainder of the meal she was voluble in praises of Mr. Elderby's manners and conversation, and in regrets that he could not be prevailed on to remain to lunch.

Marjorie Day had never, as we have seen, been out in the chilling air of the world. She had, with all her courage, the sensitiveness of one accustomed from her birth, to an atmosphere of tenderness and delicate consideration. Her experience of the supercilious manner, the cold stare, the sting in some remark which, not ostensibly aimed at herself, she could not fail to interpret, was something, of course, altogether novel in her experience.

Sitting there, in the soft, green gloom, Marjorie's eyes flashed, and her cheeks burned, as she recalled some recent tones and words of Mrs. Earle's. She wondered if this kind of behavior was what women, helpless and dependent, had to endure from those in whose power circumstances had placed them.

The result of all this was that Marjorie began to think seriously of leaving Old Lanes. There was not sufficient inducement to remain longer, she reflected. Her health had regained its old perfectness. She had written to Dr. Amoury, with the delight which a book-lover can best appreciate, that her reading had begnn to have the old spell for her. Her

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plans for Donil Kemp could never be set in motion while she remained at Cameron Brae. Old scenes and old faces began to draw her powerfully. Why should she force herself to bear Mrs. Earle's insults and innuendoes any longer?

In that mood she might have decided the question once for all; but there was a swift movement among the bushes behind her, a strong step on the pine-needles; a tall, masculine figure darkened over her. The next moment Mr. Elderby was lifting his hat to Miss Day.

He could not have appeared more opportunely. There was no questioning the welcome which shone from the eyes under the gray hat. You must remember how very solitary Marjorie was feeling at this moment.

"What a surprise you have given me, Mr. Elderby! I did not know you were thinking of returning to Red Ledge."

"I was not sure of it myself, when I went away; but I found the place, — or was it, after all, Moose Falls? — had an attraction powerful enough to draw me back. I am glad to find you here, Miss Day."

His glance, his tone, made the words seem something more than a mere civility.

"May I sit down, or shall I intrude on some happy revery?"

Marjorie smiled slightly. "My revery was not of a kind I shall be sorry to have dissipated." There

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was a little significant cadence which was not lost upon the hearer.

Young Elderby threw himself down on the mosses and ferns which smothered the long, knotted roots of the old pine.

"You can hardly imagine," he said with a glance which swept the whole scene, "how delicious this seems after the fiery days, the dust and dulness of Boston streets at this season. It is like coming into a new world."

"I hope Boston did not go without her east wind — her one delight through her dog-days."

"We had occasionally a whiff and a scent, doubly tantalizing by their sudden disappearance. I suppose you have been here often, Miss Day."

"Several times. I am beginning to know how a pilgrim feels when he goes to worship at his shrine."

"You are fortunate in having one of Nature's own shaping — with such a grand chording of waters too."

"Yes; they are in fine voice to-day. If a few summer showers can do so much, what must the great spring and autumn equinoxes do with these Falls? With what a grand roar and passion they must hurl themselves through that chasm into the pool below! How I should like to be here after a great storm!"

"I hope it may be my good fortune to be with you at that time."

Something in young Elderby's tone seemed to dif-

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ferentiate this remark from those gallant speeches which men of the world make to women.

A few minutes later Jack was saying, "I was sorry not to see you at Cameron Brae when I called."

"Thank you, Mr. Elderby. I learned of your visit at lunch. I was sorry I had missed you when later I found your card on my table."

"I wonder if that Mrs. Earle had anything to do with my not seeing you?" thought young Elderby.

In the light, desultory talk of the next half-hour one memory was uppermost with both. It was that of the word Marjorie had spoken when they sat together the last time in Mrs. Cameron's drawing-room.

The feeling which had prompted young Elderby to ignore what she had told him would, of course, prevent his ever recurring to it. He would always meet Miss Day on the ground of her own ladyhood. She could, as we have seen, fully appreciate the fineness of the compliment his reticence paid her. No words could have made it so complete. He was a gentleman, she said to herself, and again he saw the eyes in all their luminous darkness, shine on him from under the gray hat.

There was a swift, scurrying sound in the bushes overhead. This time the movement seemed that of some small wild creature, but, an instant later, Donil Kemp had leaped from the underbrush to Marjorie's side. There he stood, just the figure an artist would have seized for his drawing of a street gamin. The

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light eyes shone bright above the high, thin bridge of nose. The tan seemed to be disputing with the freckles which should hold the larger claim on the pinched, narrow face.

"I seed that gray dress o' yourn when I got atop o' the bank, an' I put for it lively," said Donil; and if his greeting had been the most polished in the world, there could not have been more heart in it.

Marjorie wondered what sort of an impression Donil's figure and address would make on the elegant gentleman who sat near her. She took Donil's hand in her own and said in a way that must have gratified him, "Donil, my little friend, I am very glad to see you."

Donil slipped down on the bed of ferns and mosses at her feet. The look of devotion in his eyes, as he lifted them to the lady, gave a new expression to his whole face.

But a swift change came over it. Donil caught sight of the tall figure on the other side of Marjorie. The sight was evidently the reverse of pleasing to him. He had no more idea of disguising his feelings than a child of two years. Some primeval instinct of jealousy stirred in the boy's soul. This stranger, with his quiet, assured air, his tall, shapely limbs, his vigorous manhood, was an offence in Donil's eyes. The spare, shabby figure sat very erect. Every hair of the rough head appeared to bristle with resentment. Marjorie thought that pelican-beak of a nose

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looked more insistent and truculent than ever. Donil glanced at her with an expression which declared more plainly than words his sense of proprietorship in her, and his determination to yield no inch of his rights to this insolent intruder.

It was to Miss Day a new aspect of Donil's character.

"This is my friend, Mr. Elderby," she said. "Won't you speak to him, Donil?"

"I don't knowd him," replied Donil, his whole appearance uncompromising as possible.

Jack Elderby, secretly amused, was equal to the occasion.

"But I know you, Donil," he said.

"How do you know me?" asked the boy, surprised in his turn, but not in the least placated.

"Because this is not the first time I have seen you."

"I never seed you. How can you have seed me, then?"

Voice and look gave Donil the appearance of a small Rhadamanthus.

"You had eyes for but one thing at that moment, Donil," said the firm, manly voice, whose very tones would have carried conviction to a less prejudiced hearer. "But I will tell you how it happened, and then you shall judge for yourself."

Then he related the scene which he had witnessed when he sat a few weeks before, in the old tavern

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portico. Only an eye-witness could have brought out the drama as young Elderby did to his two auditors.

"At the moment," he concluded, "when I was on the point of leaping over the railing and hurrying to the lady and the boy, with the hope that I might be of some service, an old friend and classmate of mine, who had been all about the world, and whom I had not seen for years, touched me on the shoulder. When — it seemed but a minute or two later, though doubtless it was longer — I looked again up the road, there was nobody in sight. I said to myself, 'I hope I shall see that boy sometime. I want to take his hand and thank him for his brave deed.'"

Jack had not proceeded far when a change came over Donil. A surprised, interested look supplanted the sullen disapproval, the absolute scepticism, with which he had listened when the stranger began. Occasionally he turned and shot a glance of curiosity and intelligent sympathy at Miss Day.

A slow flush had arisen in her cheeks. She, in her turn, was as completely taken by surprise as Donil.

There was a little silence, filled with the leap and laughter of the water.

"So you see I was right!" resumed the deep, pleasant voice again. "Didn't I know you, Donil?"

"Yes; I seed you did now," a little grudgingly still.

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"And tell me — honestly now — don't you think the boy who did that brave deed would, after he learned what I saw and what I thought of him, feel I was his friend and want to shake hands with me?"

Donil shrugged his shoulders and stared up into the pine-tree and down at Marjorie rather dubiously. Then he turned and gazed, solemn and questioning, into the dark, bright eyes of the stranger — eyes that women and children believed in.

In a minute or two his last suspicion and dislike vanished. He rose, walked slowly forward, and laid his hard, brown little claw in the strong grasp of Jack Elderby.

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XXVIII

THREE PEOPLE AND A HAPPY AFTERNOON

THAT afternoon was a pleasant one to three people at Moose Falls. Donil formed a curious contrast to the gentleman and lady with whom he was often in company. Mr. Elderby and Miss Day moved along the banks and among the rocks of the river-bed, or off to the narrow foot-bridge at the head of the Falls, where a single glance took in the whole of the long, winding water-vista.

Donil was sure of a welcome whenever he returned to the pair. But the boy had the restlessness of all young, untamed creatures, and wandered off frequently by himself. Perhaps this was partly owing to the conversation's getting beyond his depth. They surprised him sometimes listening with puzzled eyes.

The first time they were alone together Marjorie said to young Elderby, —

"You gave me as great a surprise as you did Donil."

"It was all brought out by his evident disapproval of me. I wanted to win his confidence — satisfy

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him of my good-will. To tell him what I had seen seemed the simplest way of doing it."

"I am sure it was."

"I presume," he continued after a little pause, "that I have a more vivid sense of the scene — of the peril — than you can have, Miss Day! I would not live that half-minute over again for — any bribe the world could offer me!"

"I shall never forgive myself for that heedlessness," Marjorie replied. "My only excuse is that something had happened which made me oblivious of everything else for the time."

Afterward they talked of Donil. Marjorie related what she knew of his orphanhood, his poverty, his squalid home.

"He had saved her life," she concluded, "and the least she could do was to give him a chance for his own."

Young Elderby insisted that he had a right to share Miss Day's interest in Donil Kemp, as he had been a witness to his heroism.

"I beg you will allow him to become my *protégé* in part, Miss Day. Something should be done for him at once," he said.

Marjorie was so gratified by this interest and offer that almost before she knew it she was going over the obstacles which prevented her rendering Donil any but the most trivial service, so long as she remained at Cameron Brae. She explained how the

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comfort of its mistress, the habits of the household, prevented her making any effort on his behalf which would involve her with the Hearns.

"And when the effort is made," she concluded, "it must be a decided one — a thorough breaking-off for that poor child of all his present life and associations."

Jack heartily concurred with Miss Day's view; but at this instant the talk was interrupted by a woman's voice, surprised, eager, a little in their rear.

"Why, that is certainly Mr. Elderby! Who can the lady be with him?"

"Hush!" said a second voice in a lower key, but still perfectly distinct to the subjects of the caution. "They will certainly hear you."

Moose Falls formed a point of attraction to the tourists in its vicinity. People from the resorts within a wide radius came here. But the remoteness of the place always saved it from a crowd. Indeed, the seclusion of the Falls formed one of their attractions to genuine lovers of nature. But on all pleasant days during the season, the banks and rocks were sure to be brightened by the dresses of women, and their voices and laughter, with those of their escorts, blended with the song of the waters. Among the various groups Marjorie had never encountered a familiar face. The people whom she knew had thus far not inclined to Red Ledge, which as a summer resort was still in the early stages of its history.

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In the present instance it would not be easy to elude the strangers. They were curious to see the face of that slender, graceful woman in her gray draperies, who would gladly have avoided the meeting.

Jack Elderby had recognized the voices at once. The speakers were acquaintances of his stopping at the hotel.

He spoke suddenly. "That is a wide chasm, Miss Day. Do you think you can leap it with my assistance?"

Marjorie glanced at the great cleft between the rocks, down which a torrent was foaming.

"Oh, I haven't the least doubt in the world," she answered rather eagerly.

A few moments later they were over the chasm. It was not likely Jack's acquaintances would attempt to follow. Only limbs light and agile could accomplish that leap; but Marjorie's had had a good deal of training when she was with her father among the Alps. She had gone over now with the spring and lightness of a doe.

She wondered if Mr. Elderby had suspected she preferred not to meet those people, and had taken this method of sparing her any embarrassment. She glanced at his face, but he was too thorough a man of the world to betray himself by so much as a glance.

In a few moments he suggested they should visit

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a small series of cataracts near at hand. "They were beautiful," he said, "in certain lights, with opal gleams and flashes. They were just beyond that dark, massive heap of rocks 'backed like a whale.' Would Miss Day allow him to conduct her there?"

Of course Miss Day assented, and felt herself amply repaid by the sight of the tiny waterfalls. But she still had a doubt whether her companion's motive in bringing her to them was not to avoid a meeting with the Red Ledge party.

Late in the afternoon the young man and woman were walking down the road which wound along the summit of Moose Falls banks. One caught at this distance and height only an occasional glimpse through the thick trees and underbrush of the waters far below. But the full-volumed chant rose joyfully to the summit.

A little in front of the pair rode Donil Kemp, mounted on that splendidly built, high-stepping Hercules, who looked as though nature had originally designed him for a foremost place in regal processions and grand parades.

Donil himself was in a seventh heaven. He sat erect as a centaur, blissfully oblivious of the contrast between himself and the glossy thoroughbred.

When the three had emerged at the top of the bank, near the spot where Hercules was tethered, his master, half in earnest, half in sport, had told the boy he should have a ride if he could mount the horse.

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Donil stared dumb with amazement at the speaker. Then he suddenly burst out, —

"Say, Mister, did you mean that for true and honest now?"

"Certainly, Donil. I shall never make you a promise which I don't mean to keep."

Donil gave a cry — a yell, Marjorie thought, which must have resembled an Indian war-whoop! He was off in a flash, and a moment later he was scrambling up Hercules' flank. Once fairly mounted, he bore himself with a solemn dignity which would not have misbecome a conqueror on his return from victorious battle-fields.

Marjorie entered thoroughly into the spirit of the scene.

"You have grappled Donil to your heart with hooks of steel, Mr. Elderby," she said. "What a figure that boy does cut!" some pity in her voice, which her eyes sparkling with fun half contradicted. "Only there is such a dreadful incongruity between horse and rider. If Hercules were some creature lean and gaunt as Rosinante, you would have a harmonious group."

Jack laughed. "But not half so effective a contrast, Miss Day. How straight and solemn Donil sits in his shabbiness, as though he were to the manner born! I should like to enter into his feeling at this moment."

"No doubt it is one which a king might envy. Do you see his face, which, alas, is mostly nose!"

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They chatted in this vein as they descended the long slope of road which led past the Falls.

Just before they reached the point where the road forked, one branch leading to Old Lanes, the other intersecting half a mile off, the highway which climbed to Red Ledge, Mr. Elderby said to Marjorie, —

"I bless my stars, Miss Day, that I can carry off to Boston the memory of this afternoon at Moose Falls. I must start for the city to-morrow morning, where I may be compelled to stay for several days. I trust I shall not be so often reminded of St. Laurence and his gridiron as I was last week. When I return I hope to have the pleasure of calling on you and Mrs. Cameron."

Marjorie made a polite rejoinder, but under that was a fresh pleasure, a lightness of heart which Mr. Elderby's words had inspired.

A few minutes later she and Donil, watching at the fork of the road, saw the man turn and lift his cap before he rode out of sight.

The young woman and the boy were silent for a while, as they walked between the pastures, through a long, winding lane, at the end of which they must separate.

At last Donil looked up in her face, and burst out fervently, —

"Say, I like him heaps and heaps, Missus! It was awful good in him to give me that ride."

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"Yes; it was very kind, and I am sure you may feel Mr. Elderby is your friend. But, Donil, you remember I was to be 'Miss Day' to you, and not 'Missus' any more."

Donil looked convicted, and twirled his thumbs. Then he said apologetically, —

"It beats all, how a feller's allus a forgettin' things he wants to remember."

"Yes, I know, Donil. But if he keeps on trying through all the forgettings, he will remember at last."

After another silence he suddenly spoke again; this time in a lower tone.

"I did what you told me the other night."

"What I told you, Donil?"

"Yes; I — I said somethin' to God. I slid out o' the winder, and put straight for Moose Falls. The moon shone like it was day, and all that water was a-shinin' an' dazzlin' wonderful. I went to the rock where you sat that time, and I kneeled down, and spoke right out, the best I knowed how."

Marjorie laid her hand on the shabby cap. The look the boy loved was in her eyes, but she did not speak.

"But I hadn't fine words like your'n was to say," continued Donil. "I told Him to take no offence, as it was the best I could do. You think He'd know what I was after, don't you?"

There was a real anxiety in his tone.

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"You may be sure He would, Donil. With God it is our hearts, not our words, which matters."

Donil pondered that remark a while. Then he looked up with a new thought in his eyes.

"I know'd too what your words mean, leastwise mostly, though I be skinned if I could say 'em."

In a little while they parted. Marjorie went on toward the stately home at Cameron Brae, and Donil to the little brown, crumbling roof in Bramble Hollow.

Donil never asked any questions. Miss Day had only of late told him her name. She might, whenever he met her, for all Donil Kemp knew, have come straight down from the moon.

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XXIX

MISS DAY'S COURAGE IS NOT TESTED

ONCE more by herself, Marjorie moved with a slower gait than usual. But all her thoughts were alert now. A change had come over her spirits. Nature wore its old smile to her eyes. The world was glad and beautiful again. Could it be possible she asked herself, that a little while ago she had seriously thought of running away, at the first harsh wind that blew upon her? What right had she to expect the path should be all rose-strewn for her feet, when others were forced to tread such rugged ways? Was she to permit a narrow-minded woman's suspicions, jealousies, and innate vulgarity, to spoil her life at Cameron Brae?

By this time Marjorie felt brave enough to face a regiment of Mrs. Earles.

"Of course, I cannot tell why women like her should have been created, or rather have created themselves," she mused; "but that is a question which does not concern you, Marjorie Day. Your affair just now is to see that this woman does not invade your peace, poison your atmosphere, drive you

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from your post, before the hour strikes — that cannot be far away — for you to leave it."

All her forces of will, her conscience, her self-respect, her native common-sense, too, had their part in Marjorie's decision.

"No, Mrs. Earle, your most Gorgon stare, your most covert sneer, your most pitiful sarcasm, shall not drive me away before it is time to go."

But Marjorie learned she was not to be put to the test with her enemy. She had just entered the grounds, when a voice, calling her name, arrested her. In an instant Algernon Earle had bounded to her side.

"I saw you, Miss Day," he panted. "I've got some great news to tell you."

"It must be immensely important, or it would not take the breath out of you like this."

"Mamma and I are going to leave to-morrow morning. Papa has written us to join him without fail, as some cousins are come from the West, and it won't do to slight them. Mamma is awfully vexed; but she says it can't be helped. We shall return to Cameron Brae sometime."

Marjorie drew a long, tremulous breath, thinking there would be no more lunches and dinners with Mrs. Earle.

Then her heart had its turn.

"But I shall miss your tap on my chamber door, and your good-night, my little Algernon," she said, running her fingers through the shining curls.

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"But I sha'n't forget you, Miss Day," with the blue sparkling eyes on her face. "Do you want to know how I am going to remember you always?"

"Certainly, I do."

"I shall say '*Ich dien*' every day, and then I shall remember."

Marjorie Day and Mrs. Earle met for the last time at dinner that night. The younger woman encountered the gaze of the elder several times, and there was something almost baleful in it. There was a consciousness of defeat too, mingled with the other expression, as though Mrs. Earle perceived that Miss Day was, for the present at least, mistress of the situation.

If Mrs. Earle could have expressed her inmost thoughts and feelings to Marjorie at this time, they would have run in this wise: —

"I am forced to go away, and you will have the field all to yourself. As though I didn't read you perfectly, and understand what brought you here, and what your game is! I mean to come back one of these days, and you may find, in the end, that you have reckoned without your host. Meanwhile it just amounts to this: I am afraid of you and I hate you."

Could Marjorie in her present mood have replied, it would have been much in these words:—

"There is no earthly reason why you should fear or hate me. You have made the greatest of mistakes. Do you suppose that I would harm a hair of your

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head — that I could stoop so low as to attempt to undermine you in Mrs. Cameron's favor? Do believe me, Mrs. Earle, I have no more designs on her wealth than I have, at this moment, on the estates of the man in the moon."

Marjorie did not suspect that Mrs. Earle had, during these last days, harbored an additional grudge against herself.

It was that lady's fixed conviction that her rather dull life at Cameron Brae might have been agreeably enlivened by a flirtation with Jack Elderby, for whom she had conceived an immense liking, if Miss Day had not somehow contrived to come between.

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XXX

GLIMPSES ALL ALONG A MONTH

MORE than a month had passed since Mrs. Earle left Cameron Brae. Marjorie was made more conscious of the hostile element which had invaded her atmosphere by her relief at its disappearance. Did Mrs. Cameron, she sometimes wondered, have an inkling of this? Her manner toward Miss Day had a marked graciousness of late, almost as though she wished to atone for something.

During these weeks Marjorie had been so content as almost to surprise herself. No friend had discovered her hiding, although the mystery could not, in the nature of things, be kept up much longer.

Indeed, some of her friends had threatened that they would besiege Dr. Amoury in his house, after the season was over, if he still persisted in keeping her in invalid's retreat. It was enough that they had deferred to his physician's fiat all summer. But patience had its limits. When would she emerge from her seclusion?

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And even Dr. Amoury had written: —

"My Dear Child, — How much longer is this thing to go on? In a little while your friends will be flocking from mountain and seashore, and there will be a clamor for you, which no further exercise of my authority can keep in check! When am I to bring you back to Briarsley?"

Dr. Amoury had promised himself the unusual indulgence of a short trip that autumn. The date of this brief vacation, which was to close with a day at Old Lanes, had not yet been settled.

This was the period when Marjorie wrote gayly to her friends.

"In a few weeks, at farthest, I shall emerge from my retirement, not as once, a pallid skeleton, but plump and rosy as an English milkmaid.

"Then the mystery of this summer's hiding will all be brought to light. But I forewarn you that the *dénouement* will be of the most prosaic and practical sort. There is nothing romantic, nothing to strike the imagination, nothing even interesting, in the whole affair.

"Meanwhile, don't fret your souls, my dears. Just believe I am writing this from — a little corner of Arcadia."

Marjorie wrote this in entire good faith; but possibly her friends might not have felt so secure about the utter lack of romance in her present life had they seen her occasionally moving about the grounds of Cameron Brae, or the banks and river-bed of Moose Falls, with a tall, manly figure at her side.

During these weeks young Elderby came and went

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between Boston and Red Ledge. He never went away without visiting Old Lanes. Occasionally he lunched with Mrs. Cameron, who always brightened in his presence. To him, at least, she was something more than the ghost of the beautiful, brilliant mistress of Cameron Brae. He brought her various small things, pretty and choice, which were associated with his father, who had a taste for collecting bric-a-brac. One of these gifts was a lovely jar of very ancient Delft, which the elder man had picked up at Christie's, the last time he was abroad. But the gift which Mrs. Cameron valued most was a small crayon head of Jack's father, the work of an English artist. This was set in an oval silver frame, exquisitely chased.

Mrs. Cameron gazed long and earnestly on the picture. It was the Philip Elderby of her young romance.

"He seems alive again as I look!" she said to Jack, with a little pathetic tremor in her voice.

When the young man was gone, she showed the picture to Miss Day, who had not been present when she received it.

"There is, at times," she said, "a slight family likeness between the two; but Philip Elderby was greatly handsomer than his son."

Marjorie gazed intently at the picture. The head was very spirited, the expression of the face full of animation and intelligence. The dark eyes held a

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lurking smile, and their brightness and candor were accented by the whole expression of a countenance singularly attractive. The face was that of a man in his prime, one who found the world agreeable, and who had heart and brain enough to make life pleasant for those about him. There were glimmers of gray about the temples, and in the dark beard.

"Yes," said Marjorie, replying to Mrs. Cameron, after a prolonged scrutiny of the crayon, "he is certainly a handsomer man than his son."

She did not, however, make audible her conclusion. "One can afford to say all that when the son has the finer head, the stronger, nobler face."

To young Elderby the real charm of his visits to Old Lanes was not the hours passed with Mrs. Cameron. He felt, it is true, very grateful to that lady for her share in the beginning of his acquaintance with Miss Day. He was ready for that reason, and because of her evident friendship for his father, the exact nature of which he did not suspect, to render her any service in his power.

But Jack Elderby did not find the poetry, the life and zest of his visits, at Cameron Brae, but at Moose Falls. The spell was not woven of those rocks and waters, but of a presence and companionship which he found among them. It was this presence, this companionship, which drew him once or twice a week over the rugged roads between Red Ledge and Old Lanes. Nature herself breathed an air of large

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tranquillity, joyousness, freedom, about these interviews with Miss Day. Walls and ceilings would have had quite another effect.

Young Elderby never attempted to penetrate the mystery which, to his imagination, environed Miss Day. On the contrary, he rather guarded the young woman from herself. It was impossible that she should not, consciously or unconsciously, allude to events and circumstances of her past. But he was apt to turn the conversation into another channel. He never evinced a shade of curiosity regarding the motives which had brought her to Old Lanes. Marjorie was not long in perceiving all this. It touched her — it amused her too — remembering how little there was in her case to conceal.

Marjorie had paid young Elderby the highest compliment a woman of her type can pay a man when she said of him, "He is a gentleman!"

She said this with a little glow of exultation, and a good many times, during the last weeks of that summer.

It had, for some time, been Miss Day's habit to visit Moose Falls twice a week. Mr. Elderby contrived to learn her usual days for coming, and his own often coincided. No allusion was made to the matter. Their meetings might, so far as words went, have always come about by the merest accident.

In these meetings, Marjorie was the old self which her father and her friends would have known.

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She had avowed her position to Mr. Elderby. There was no reason why she should keep up the old *rôle* of half-suppressed personality which she had maintained so steadily through all the tests of Cameron Brae. But it was delightful to hold thought and feeling in leash no longer. This was one secret of Jack Elderby's attraction for her. He brought with him the atmosphere of her old life. She could be herself with him, as she had been with her father before he had gone away and the trouble came, and she had to leave Sea Knolls.

Marjorie often sat on some rude bench or rough-hewn chair of rock, while Jack Elderby stretched his shapely limbs by the side of the seat, which seemed to him transformed for the time into a throne. The talk followed its own sweet will, glancing sometimes about the most trifling matters, full of jest, merriment, repartee, and then, passing suddenly, by some suggestion or association, to themes large as human life, solemn as eternity.

Of course each mind stimulated and challenged the other. As the acquaintance grew, it appeared that they had many literary and artistic sympathies in common. They talked over with enthusiasm their favorite authors, artists, musicians. It would not have been possible for Jack Elderby, had he tried, to analyze the impression which Marjorie Day had made on him. To say that she was a revelation to him, — a new creation; that the world — life itself

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— seemed changed, diviner, because of her, — are old words grown a little threadbare with the using. Yet they must always be true of any man who loves a woman with the best and noblest side of himself. Jack Elderby went away from one of those afternoons at Moose Falls with a feeling that Miss Day's society had exalted his mood. It was not a transient influence either. Her words lived in his thoughts — made a sweetness in the air. He often contrasted the life at Red Ledge — its formalities, ambitions, rivalries — with the simplicity and freshness of those few hours each week at Moose Falls.

Even his old chaffing and badinage with Grace Halifax, who had the feminine gift of saying bright things and putting a man on his mettle, seemed vapid and trivial now. When he thought of her beauty, something of that old witchery had vanished. He had felt the spell of a finer, more sensitive loveliness, a loveliness which had less inthralled his senses than shone into his soul. But the two women could not be compared. The difference between them, he thought, was like that between a rose, regal and odorous, and a snowy, fragrant lily.

At this time Mrs. Wilmarth, who was finishing the season at Bar Harbor, wrote brief, chilly letters to her brother, in which she made no comment on his return to Red Ledge.

"Poor Hester! She has not forgiven me," he would say to himself, remembering their last *tête-à-tête*.

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XXXI

REMINISCENCES — SIDE-LIGHTS — MRS. 'BIJAH HEARN

MARJORIE DAY was certainly not an unfledged school-girl. She was a young woman who had, or who might have had — therein lying a world of difference — trains of lovers.

Soon after her return from Smith College, her father had said to her one day in his quiet, humorous fashion, —

"I shall have to seize the first possible moment to rush you across the Atlantic, my dear."

"Why, papa, should we be in such a hurry?" she had inquired.

"Otherwise Sea Knolls will become

'Colchis strand,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.'"

Marjorie laughed the laugh that was sweetest in the world to the man's heart.

"No doubt," she said, "we shall have to make a hurried flight, or else find, 'Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer, another knocks at the door.'"

Then with one of those swift impulses which had

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such a charm to those who knew her best, she went over to her father and sat down on the arm of his chair.

"Dear old papa, it is all your fault," she said. "Somehow you put other men in the shade. They don't reach your stature. In the first place, they are not half so handsome as you, my glittering gray-beard; and then their talk seems, compared with yours, like Gratiano's 'infinite deal of nothing.'"

"All that, my dear, is immensely flattering to an old man's conceit; but let him just wait until Bassanio appears on the scene!"

But he had not appeared when Marjorie went abroad, nor when, two years later, she returned home. She had meanwhile received attention and admiration enough to turn any but a well-balanced young woman's brain.

The night after the memorable meeting between young Elderby and Donil Kemp, Marjorie went over mentally the story which the man had related to the boy. It flashed across her suddenly that the scene which he had witnessed from Old Lanes tavern might have inspired Mr. Elderby with a desire to meet her. The whole event had evidently made a powerful impression on him. Was this interest in her at bottom of his first call at Cameron Brae? If that were true — her flashing instinct leaped from point to point — were all the later visits, the rides to Moose Falls, the return to Red Ledge after he had once left —

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But just here Marjorie cut her questionings short. "She had no business with them," she mentally averred. "She had come to Old Lanes with quite another purpose than to concern herself about any man's admiration!" But these ideas, having once entered her mind, showed a remarkable pertinacity in keeping there.

They made some warmth and pleasure about her heart. Marjorie could not, if she would, ignore the fact that young Elderby's admiration was in some sense a compliment to herself simply which no other man's had ever been.

It was evident that the whole acquaintance of these young people had some elements which must appeal strongly to the imaginations of both. For Jack Elderby it had much more. It was his conviction that his knowledge of Miss Day would make another thing of his future. Marjorie had, with a single word, defined her position at Cameron Brae. She had done this in a little more pronounced way than anybody, except Mrs. Earle, would have been inclined to do. Though her conscience could never again accuse her of "masquerading," she still made it a point in her talk with Mr. Elderby to avoid all "better days" allusions.

In this there was plenty of pride, of course, but it was never the pride of a shallow, ignoble nature.

It was impossible, however, that Miss Day should fully carry out her purpose. She could not be always

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on her guard. Bits of autobiography cropped out in her talk. Allusions to scenes, events, people, came up in one way and another. Her new friend was not long in making the discovery that she had passed some time abroad, and used her eyes to much better purpose than many of his young countrywomen. He learned of famous picture-galleries and localities she had visited. She little suspected how many clews to her history a sentence, a careless remark, afforded one whose interest in her was too deep not to be always on the alert. Her father's name came up frequently in her talk. There were flashing reminiscences of her school-life, her father's death, the breaking up of the home at Sea Knolls, the long, almost mortal, illness which followed later. All these became a hoarded part of Jack Elderby's knowledge of Miss Day. Aside, too, from her own fragmentary revelations, he began to form a theory, not so very remote from the facts, of the circumstances which had brought her to Cameron Brae.

Six weeks had passed since Jack Elderby returned to Red Ledge. The summer had waned by this time. One afternoon in September the young people drifted into a talk which, because of events that followed, made a lasting impression.

The two were sitting under a clump of cedars on a bank, a little below the upper cascade of Moose River. The water swept over the low terrace in dazzling masses veined with tints of rose and emerald.

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The river was low at this time. There had not been a rainfall for weeks. Faint winds haunted the young pines, as though they had wandered away from the far sea and brought with them a memory of its murmurs. No lightest gray cloud dreamed on the deep azure overhead. The drowsy air was saturated with sunshine, full of sweet, mellow scents. We all know such days. They haunt — a little shining company — the New England September. When they come they transfigure the world, and make us almost feel the only grief is, that one cannot live forever in such luminous atmospheres, under such divine skies, on an earth whose days seem to have wandered out of heaven.

Crowds of people were moving about the Falls this afternoon. There was something about Mr. Elderby and his companion which attracted the gaze of strangers. He was quite aware of this so far as Miss Day was concerned. Perhaps that was the reason he had suggested they should come to the quiet little cedar coppice just below the upper cascade.

Mr. Elderby had repeated to Miss Day a part of his talk the night before with a German officer who was staying at Red Ledge. The man had served through the French and German war. He had been an eye-witness of many of its famous events. The officer, intelligent, agreeable, youngish still in appearance, was at Sedan. His talk had all the freshness of one who had been an actor in the scenes he

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described. He had thrown some side-lights on events of world-wide celebrity, and on the great personages who at that time had changed the fate of empires.

Jack had taken a liking to the officer, and had been greatly interested in his military reminiscences. So was Miss Day, when Mr. Elderby repeated them to her.

The talk made a chord of old memories vibrate too. She spoke impulsively, —

"What a tragic interest everything about Napoleon has after Sedan! However people regard the man himself, he still stands the centre of a great historic catastrophe. What a fate that was, — to mount so high, to fall so low! I felt that when I was a young girl, in my early teens, and listened to one who had seen him in his exile on almost the only occasion when he appeared in public."

"I wish you would tell me about it, Miss Day."

As Jack spoke he caught a glimpse of eyes under the straw hat; he was always on the lookout for those.

"The circumstances were not in the least heroic," she said. "But I remember how they impressed me. We had a visitor at Sea Knolls, an old classmate of papa's, of whom he was very fond, and who had just returned from abroad.

"One evening, when a little company had gathered in the library, he told us of a scene at which he happened to be present. It was in England. He had,

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through some friends, an opportunity to hear an address by Dr. Carpenter, the physician, scholar, scientist: you must have heard of him, Mr. Elderby?"

"Yes."

"It was a grand occasion. Stanley, then in the first flush of his fame, was to follow Dr. Carpenter. Papa's friend had not sat long when he was conscious of a stir, a kind of thrill through the vast audience. Then he saw the Emperor and Empress of France with their young son, and the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, enter the hall.

"The seats reserved for these high personages were in our friend's vicinity. He had a rare chance for studying their faces, watching their movements. He was the sort of man to make the most of this. I remember his very words as he drew each one of the group for us, — the pale, languid Emperor; the Empress, graceful and beautiful; and that slender, boyish figure, 'born in the purple' as Queen Victoria wrote of him afterward, and the chances at that time seeming to make it quite possible Fate might smile again, and the boyish temples wear the crown his father had lost for him.

"Then there was the Baroness, chatting pleasantly with the party, and evidently on familiar terms with these ex-Majesties.

"After Stanley had had his turn, the Emperor addressed a few questions to him with an accent which showed plainly that the king's English was not his vernacular.

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"It is so long ago since I drank in this account; and yet I seem to hear the crackling of the flames in the chimney, the crying of the winds in the shrubberies outside, blending with the speaker's voice. It was a cool autumn night, I remember.

"Of course the scene, looked at on the surface, would be commonplace enough; but it was full of suggestion and of a certain kind of pathos too.

"I heard that night for the first time of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts. I learned about her vast wealth, which makes one dizzy to think of; about those noble charities which have endeared her name to the English people. In the end I thought more about her, I believe, than about her famous companions. To this day I never hear her name, and one must of course hear that often in England, without the whole scene coming back to me. It seems just as though I had been there, instead of papa's friend, and seen it all."

"I can quite understand your feeling, Miss Day," said young Elderby; "I have precisely the same over some events which have been related to me."

"One day," continued Marjorie, carried away by the swarm of memories which the talk had started up, "I broke out to papa: —

"'It must be a grand thing to be Baroness Burdett-Coutts.'

"'Why do you think so, Marjorie?' he asked.

"'Because it would be so nice to have all her money,' I answered. 'Just think of it, papa!'

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"He did not say a word; but I shall never forget the way he looked at me. He had a horror of any one he cared for, setting a supreme value on wealth. There were special reasons for this, as I learned afterward.

"'O papa,' I cried out, 'don't look like that! As though I cared for myself — just! But I was thinking of others. One could give away all one wanted — never have to stop to think, you know. That must certainly be happiness!'

"He smiled on me then. 'Giving is beautiful: it is divine,' he said. 'But the owner of vast wealth has vast responsibilities too, to God, to the world, to himself. I think you may rather bless than envy Baroness Burdett-Coutts. I have no desire — I think I should be rather sorry to know you would ever be one of the world's rich women, my Marjorie.'

"One thing is certain: I shall never be tested in the way papa spoke of," added Marjorie with her low amused laugh.

"What could have possessed her," she was wondering the next moment, with a little flush of consciousness, "to run on in this strain to Mr. Elderby!"

It seemed to him this was, in some respects, the pleasantest, most intimate in talk and mood, of the afternoons which he had passed at Moose Falls with Miss Day since he returned to Red Ledge. He could have told you these were eight in all, and two people with a wide range of thought and interests in touch

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can find a great deal to say and hear in some hours of eight afternoons.

An hour later, Marjorie was in one of the narrow, winding lanes which branched off to the highway. A woman suddenly emerged before her from a little cross-road on the left. Marjorie was struck by the tired air and the general shabbiness of the figure as it drew nearer. The clothes seemed to have caught some of the wearer's air of general hopelessness, and to hang about her in a limp, disorderly fashion. She was not precisely ragged, but the faded cotton gown, the sleazy shawl, the ill-conditioned straw hat, all bore the same testimony to slovenliness or poverty.

The woman carried a large basket, which had evidently seen much hard usage. She was small, thin, round-shouldered.

Marjorie saw the dull eyes, — the haggard face, where poverty and misery had graven deeper lines than years. Indeed, a closer view revealed signs of past comeliness in the woman, who was now regarding Marjorie with a half-wistful, half-curious stare.

As they passed each other, the pathos of the face and figure went to Marjorie's heart. She kept on a few steps, and then turned to look at the woman.

The latter had set her basket on the ground, and turned to look too.

Some sudden impulse, which she could not resist, drew Marjorie to the stranger. She retraced the few steps between them, and the pity in her voice was accented by her eyes, as she asked: —

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"Is there anything I can do for you?"

Surprise brought a new life into the woman's face. Her lips trembled for a moment. Her voice was sad and broken, but not harsh, when she answered.

"You are very good, ma'am, but I don't want you to think I am jest a common beggar!"

"Of course not," said Marjorie's quiet, reassuring tones. "But how could you suppose I should have such a thought? You seemed tired and worn, and so I took the liberty to speak to you."

"It was very good of you. I'm carryin' home some clothes I've been doin' up. They're a good deal of a heft such a hot afternoon."

"And was there nobody to do it for you?"

"Well, Donil or Matt might perhaps 'a' done it, but they're gone off berryin'."

Marjorie had heard the name. In an instant her thought leaped to the truth. This shabby, solitary figure was Donil's *Miss* Hearn! She looked at the woman with deepened interest and pity.

"Yes," said the woman, and the look drew out her speech again. "I've had such troubles as you could never dream of, and they've taken the heart and sperit out of me. You'll know without my sayin' more, when I tell you there's a man at the bottom of all, an' he's the man I married when I was a young, thoughtless thing. But he'll be home to-night on a tearin' drunk, and that's all there is left on him."

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Marjorie hesitated a moment. She could not speak of Donil to this woman, and the reasons which had made her avoid any communications with the Hearn family were cogent as ever.

"I am very sorry for you. I should be glad to help you. But I have only a little change about me. Won't you let me give you that, with my good wishes?"

Her smile, as she drew out her purse, made the act seem less like a favor bestowed than one received.

She emptied the change, which probably did not exceed a couple of dollars, into the hard bare palm.

"Don't let your husband get hold of this," she said, half warning, half pleading.

"You needn't be afraid o' that, ma'am!" replied Mrs. Hearn.

A minute later, with some last kind words, Marjorie had passed, and left Mrs. Hearn standing in the lane, with a new life and pleasure in her face.

As Marjorie went on, through the growing, fragrant dusk, her thoughts swarmed busily.

"That woman is certainly worth saving. How I would like to take her away from that drunken brute of a husband, and lift her into comfort and self-respect, and give her crushed womanhood a chance to assert itself once more!

"Ah, the things you could do, — the people you could help, the rough ways you could smooth,

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the lives you could gladden, if you only had — now while you are about it, give your fancy the rein — say a quarter of a million.

"A quarter of a million! Cry for the moon, Marjorie Day!"

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XXXII

A MORNING AND ANOTHER COAST

"HARK! That sounds like the Overland."

The speaker, a small, daintily framed woman, with blond hair and bright, piquant face, sat in the midst of a group of ladies on the wide front piazza of the Raymond Hotel at Pasadena.

The scene all around was full of color, of movement, of gayety, and of human life. There was a glow, a dazzling brightness, a sparkling reflection, on every hand. The whole might perhaps, with the crowds of gayly dressed people, moving about in pairs and small companies, or gathered in groups, lounging in luxurious ease upon the chairs and seats scattered around, have reminded one of some gorgeous old picture of mediæval Venice. The air too, the wide, sun-flooded, blossom-scented air, of a February morning in Southern California, was full of the hum of merry voices, and light peals of laughter. Life here seemed a thing set apart to all beautiful and luxurious uses, to ease and freedom and leisure. It was the kind of life which allures us in dreams or in certain ravishing strains of music, but which hardly seems to belong to this toiling, struggling planet. It was evident,

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too, that these people were, for the most part, strangers to the scene. Their looks, their manners, the inflections of their voices even, had the habits of another coast.

The crowds on the veranda of the hotel, which rose handsome and ample from the hill-summit, looked off on a scene calculated to stir the most sluggish imagination.

All around the vast building lay beds and borders gay with rare flowering plants and bushes. The footpaths and avenues which wound down the carefully-graded descent were half hidden amid the riot of bloom and leafage of different zones. Eyes, feasted and dazzled with that gorgeous, varied color, turned at last for rest and perspective to the Pasadena valley. It stretched far to the south, its lovely homes embosomed in cypress hedges, rose-bushes, heliotrope thickets, and orange groves, which half-smothered the air with heavy, luscious scents.

On the horizon-line rose the rugged masses of the Sierra Madre mountains; the morning mists flowing and drifting — a violet sea — among the mighty flanks, drowning their furrows and cañons.

And the eyes which swept this scene were used to the Northland snows!

"The Overland is late, as usual," said another lady who formed one of the group of a half-dozen women who had been blending reminiscences of home with their first impressions of the novel world about them.

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This last speaker was a little taller and darker than the first one, with eyes whose sparkling brightness was the great attraction of her face. "One must be content, I suppose, to wait a few hours for the mails when one is set down at the back door of the continent."

"The back door! It seems to me this is rather the gorgeous anteroom of Paradise."

The third speaker was a young girl, — a bronze-haired, blooming creature. She had had her choice of Europe or California that winter, and had chosen the latter from purely patriotic impulses. Her bright eyes saw everything about her in roseate atmospheres of youth and hope.

A laugh ran around the group at this remark. But the first speaker resumed with a little touch of feeling in her voice: —

"The sound of that old Overland always has a curious interest for me. It seems almost like a call from the other side of the continent. It has come such a long way. One can half fancy it brings an echo from voices left behind us."

"Oh, how pretty that is!" exclaimed the young girl, smiling and dimpling. "I wonder somebody hasn't put that in a poem!"

Just then a fresh party joined the group. Among these was a young, brilliant brunette, a school-friend of the last speaker, whom she addressed with great animation.

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"Oh, you ought to see 'Old Baldy'! He is just glorious this morning with the snow covering his bald crown like a great white wig. We have been gazing at him through the glass."

"They have been having dreadful weather in New England," exclaimed another voice from the fresh group. "Frightful cold and sleet and snow-storms. It makes one shiver to read of it."

"To think what we have escaped!" It was the voice of the first speaker again. "One wanders all about this Eden and thinks of the home-folk. If they could only look on us this precious moment, and see us sitting here amid the sunshine and the flowers — just see how the roses blow, this winter-day, about the Raymond!"

"Oh, that would be too cruel!" exclaimed the bronze-haired girl. "Just give them, out of their cold and fog and gloom, a glimpse of Paradise, and then shut it all off again!"

"Of course, all this south-western coast has immensely the advantage of New England now," said the lady with the sparkling eyes. "But just wait until midsummer, and see which is better — a land brown, bare, burned with drought, or our own green fields and meadows, our orchards and woods. The contrast will be infinitely in our favor next August."

"But we are the happy people in the Fortunate Isle to-day," said a voice from the group of newcomers. "And yet I was hardly to be envied that

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hour when I rolled out of the Fitchburg station, and found the dream of my life had come true at last, and I had actually started for California. Those words of Charles Dudley Warner haunted me like a refrain: 'So many days! So many deserts!'

"I can see now just how cold and steely the waves looked, as I said good-by to them, thinking of that other far gray ocean to which I was going. There was a new moon in the sky; I remember how it shone — a slender yellow curve — through the car window. That was one comfort at least; I was not going away from the moon and stars — I should find them in that *terra incognita* to which I was bound!

"A couple of fair, slender young women were in the seat before me. Afterward we grew acquainted, and I learned that one was a young matron, the other a fragile girl, both ordered away for the winter from the New England coast. The tears shone in their eyes. I remember how dim my own were too. It seemed such a stupendous thing — this coming to California!"

There was a chorus of affirmative interjections at this point.

"I didn't get over the dazed feeling until after we left Chicago," resumed the speaker. "Then I began to be at home with my travelling companions — to feel that we were to have this great interest and experience in common — that, shut out from all the rest of the world, we were to cross the North Amer-

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ican continent together. Then the week that followed! It was like a page out of some wonderful romance, as we came on and on, over the gray sage plains, over the solemn cactus deserts, until at last we woke up one morning, and lo, we were among the orange-trees and roses of Pasadena, with a pale glimmer of the Pacific on the far horizon, miles away!"

"But now we are here in this beautiful mid-winter of the Pacific coast," said another voice, "one thing strikes me curiously. It is the *vastness* of things. They seem all drawn on such an immense scale. It makes New England shrink to such a tiny corner of the planet. I suppose it is the 'too much nature' which Mrs. Foote tells about."

So they had their women's talk as they sat on the Raymond veranda, with the long curtain of the passion-vine hanging above them, the brilliant blossoms twinkling like jewels among the glossy leaves. They made plans for the day, or the future, as travellers amid luxury and leisure usually do. Some proposed drives to the cañons of the Sierra Madre, and among the beautiful avenues of the town, and others talked of contemplated trips to Alaska and the Sandwich Islands.

At last some gentlemen joined the party. Among the others were two young Harvard graduates, brothers of the bronze-haired girl and her friend.

This masculine element brought some change to

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the talk. It ran in a somewhat gayer strain. Jests and banter flashed back and forth, especially between the younger people.

While they were talking a gentleman passed them, leaving some companions with whom he had been having an animated talk on the causes of the decline in the Atchison and Topeka railroad stocks, and the collapse of the real-estate boom in Southern California. He was a large, strongly built man, whom one at first glance might have taken to be still in his early sixties. His head, too, was of a large, compact build, and covered with an abundant growth of gray hair; his side whiskers and bushy eyebrows were white. The features were large and well cut. The eyes had a great deal of shrewdness and fire; they had the habit of shooting a swift, penetrative glance into any face which arrested their owner's attention. The jaw was set in very resolute lines. One could trace there the marks of an iron will, — a will which could be remorseless on occasion. Yet it was a face which many men and women still called handsome. Here evidently was a masterful personality — one which would be sure to make its mark in the world. There was something massive and dominant in the very presence of the man as he moved with his erect shoulders and his step still strong and elastic, past the group on the piazza. He suddenly bent his head a little, and lifted his cap to one of the gentlemen of the party.

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"I should like to have that man's name to a check for a million of dollars."

The one who had exchanged bows with the stranger made this remark to a gentleman at his side.

"Who is he?"

"Don't you know? That is Tom Calderwood, one of California's biggest millionnaires; indeed, those who know most, say he would be likely, get at the bottom figures, to turn out the biggest of the lot."

Others had overheard this remark, and now there was a general craning of necks and focussing of glances, in the direction of the stranger.

"If he should ask my advice, I should tell him to put his name to his will, instead of a check, and to be about it too."

The brunette said this.

A laugh ran around the circle. A cruel speech with a twinkle of fun in it is made quite another thing by young smiling lips and sparkling eyes.

"It did not strike me that he looked as though he need be in a particular hurry about his will," remarked another gentleman.

"That depends on how the light happened to strike his face," added the brunette.

Her brother answered this remark, —

"You know you always did have eyes like a lynx, Barbara."

The general gaze followed the subject of this talk until he disappeared around the corner of the piazza.

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The possessor of vast wealth is always an object of interest to his kind.

"He came up here last evening in his private car from San Francisco," resumed Mr. Calderwood's acquaintance, himself a spruce, genial-faced, elderly man. "You see it standing on the track now. He goes off to San Diego to-morrow, and afterward to Mexico. Carries a huge amount of affairs in that busy brain of his."

"He carries it to some purpose if he has run his money high into the millions," rejoined the other. "How did he make it?"

"Mines, real estate, railroads! That tells the story with most of California's millionnaires. Calderwood came out here in the nick of time, just before the first rush for gold. Always had a cool business head, and knew, when the time came, how to play his game, whether with Spanish dons or American land-brokers. Of course things went rough at the beginning; but he faced the music with iron nerves and immense pluck, and came up on the top wave at last. Of late years it has been a steady rolling up of millions for him."

"How high do people put his figures?"

"Of course nobody knows just what they are, unless it may possibly be Calderwood's lawyer. I have heard people estimate them as rather over than under fifty millions."

There was a chorus of interjections.

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"I should think that sum ought to satisfy any man!"

"Did you ever know millions do that?"

So the questions and comments ran after the subject of them had disappeared around the corner of the piazza.

At last one of the ladies asked the question which is sure to follow, sooner or later, when the possessor of great wealth is under discussion.

"Is he a generous man?"

"Hardly that, I should say. Yet Calderwood is not a miser. He is always ready to pay his subordinates fairly. He is not a philanthropist, certainly, but he will put his name down handsomely to a subscription, if he is taken in the right way. He lives in fine style, gives dinners, spends a good deal of time at his club, has a beautiful place at San Rafael. But he doesn't incline to make a grand show with his wealth. Nothing of the snob about him. Everything straight and solid. In his social moods he has a good deal of dry humor, and is ready to give and take a joke. But no man ever got together all those millions without being pitiless as a nether mill-stone when the pinch came."

"I should think not," replied another gentleman, whose considerable fortune seemed to have dwindled greatly — immense wealth always having the tendency to make all lesser values appear by contrast very insignificant. "Where is all that money going to, one of these days?"

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"That remains to be seen. Calderwood has neither wife nor child — never was married. He hasn't a relative in the world, so far as I know. He is a reticent man about his own affairs. He probably owes a good deal of his success to that fact."

The individual who had been of consequence enough to form the topic of conversation for a quarter of an hour, in an atmosphere charged with novelty, excitement, and pleasure, continued his walk around one of the side piazzas. People regarded him curiously, — sometimes almost with a touch of awe. At the Raymond, a man of immense wealth would be certain to find himself an object of attention, this being more or less the case everywhere. In California, however, people have a habit of talking about wealth with those salient and glowing concretes, which always suggest the golden foundations of the country's prosperity.

The man whom we have been regarding had keen ears. He had more than once, in his early California days, owed his life to that fact. He had overheard the girl's light speech, and it had penetrated the weak joint in his armor. Nothing for years had gone home with Tom Calderwood like that careless jest. Of course he never imagined he would escape the common fate of man. He was ready as another to admit that he must die sometime; but amid the absorbing interests and excitements of his life, he was almost oblivious of the fact. He had a remark-

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ably robust constitution. The hardships which had broken down so many of his companions in the early history of California's immigration, had developed in him a power of physical endurance which seemed almost superhuman. In later years he had not faltered under the tremendous strain of his business career. He still carried his years with a stalwart strength that many a young man might have envied.

Tom Calderwood was nearing his seventy-fifth birthday. But with his vigorous health and his business-habits — become second nature now — he was just as much absorbed in making fresh accretions to his capital as though all his life lay before him.

The man was proud of his success; but not in a coarse, aggressive fashion. Perhaps the best thing which could be said about Tom Calderwood was that he had a certain standard of manhood to which he had held himself all his life. It was not a lofty ideal certainly, the man's temperament being the reverse of ideal. But this must be said for Tom Calderwood's standard: It had saved him from gravitating into coarse and vicious habits amid the perilous associations of his first years in California. This was no doubt partly owing to his sound heredity, and partly to the influences of a refined early training.

But Tom Calderwood had long been accustomed to regard the world as his legitimate prey — at least,

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in all questions relating to finances. His creed was the old, remorseless one of business. Every man must look out for himself. If he had the brains, health, and pluck, he would make his way to the front. Of course the devil — this being a convenient and comprehensive synonyme for all business failures — would get the hindmost.

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XXXIII

TOM CALDERWOOD — MILLIONNAIRE

AFTER Mr. Calderwood had reached his room, he sat a long time, looking out on the night, into which a full moon had climbed, until all the landscape lay under her white, solemn spell.

The air was sweet with scents from the flower-beds below. The sky, one dazzling sapphire through the day, held now the sweet, solemn stars. Far off, "Old Baldy" was lifting his massive, snow-smothered shoulders. A few miles away, rose the wrinkled, huddled Sierra Madre slopes. The man's gaze sought in turn all of these, and some influence from the night's brooding, starlit mystery crept over him.

All the sounds of the day — the bustle and life which filled the piazzas, halls, and rooms of the great hostelry — had died out at last. In the stillness, the speech which he had overheard that morning recurred to the watcher.

He had forgotten all about the words in an animated discussion which he had been having that evening with some capitalists, over the condition of the European bourses, the San Francisco stock-mar-

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ket, and the prospects for the immediate future of the railroads west of the Rocky Mountains.

On all these subjects the great San Francisco capitalist was an authority, and the eagerness with which men listened to his opinions, the power which he was in the world of finance, the homage which was the tribute to his success, were all pleasant to him.

He would have smiled with a touch of half-amused contempt over being pointed and stared at, whispered about, wherever he appeared, as "one of California's big millionnaires — perhaps — who knew? — the biggest of all!" Nevertheless, he had an agreeable consciousness of the curiosity, the half awe, the envy, with which his fellow-men regarded him.

For, had not the building-up of a grand fortune been the supreme aim of his life, since he began in those far days of the early fifties? Had he not schemed, toiled, taxed his brain by night and by day, to acquire his vast wealth — vaster now than men suspected?

Tom Calderwood was at home amid the excitements and passions of the stock-market. Here he was in his rightful place, as the victorious General at the head of armies. Men hung upon his words, studied his looks, watched his very gestures, seeking to obtain some clew which would enable them to shape their own plans. It had passed into a proverb on the exchange, that "Calderwood's prescience in

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everything connected with finance was simply supernatural." He could detect a coming revulsion in the commercial world, the locale of a new real-estate boom, the collapse of another which was dazzling all eyes by its splendid prospects; a rise in the most unpromising railroad bonds and stocks; a fall in others which seemed riding the topmost wave of prosperity. He could do this, too, where the oldest veterans of the exchange failed to penetrate the situation.

And he had the splendid self-reliance, the perfect nerve, to seize the grand chance when the moment came. He went fearlessly into vast speculations whose risks made other men hesitate and falter, and lose the critical moment. And he was sure to succeed in the end. The great capitalist's name was a power, not only in the East and West, but on the exchanges of Europe. And he knew his power and gloried in it. What vast railroad, real-estate, mining interests, he controlled! His delight was in power over men, over material things, over vast resources. The man was conscious that his mental faculties were as clear as in their prime. There was no sign of flagging anywhere, despite that approaching seventy-fifth birthday! When his swift glance swept the financial situation he could perceive what splendid chances lay before the capitalists of the future, if they had the brains and pluck to seize them.

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That thought stirred him, as the trumpet stirs the war-horse. As in a vision, new financial conquests unfold before him. With his sagacity, experience, large resources at swift command, he could double and treble his fortune within twenty years. The man sprang to his feet with almost the alertness of youth, and strode about the chamber. He was the great power on the bourse once more!

"Twenty years!"

He paused suddenly; he looked backward, he looked forward, and then he saw those twenty years could not be for him. Before they had passed, he must have laid off the harness. The time would have come for sleep.

What would all the struggle and the victory amount to then? What difference would his millions — more or less — make in that other life, or that oblivion, into which he had passed? Where would all this great fortune go when it slipped from his hands?

Tom Calderwood was no coward. He had faced death too many times on lonely plains, in the mining-camps, amid men whom drink, avarice, fury, had for the time changed into raging wild beasts; faced it in storming winds, and sudden earthquake, and roaring floods, with unshaken nerves; but to-night — was it that girl's careless words, was it her light laughter haunting the air? — he blenched a little.

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He went to the mirror, on which he turned a flood of light. He scanned his own face eagerly. It answered him with the old masterful look, with the old powerful lines. The eyes shone on him, bright and resolute, under their strong white brows, as in their youth. He drew a long breath, like that of a man suddenly relieved from some doubt or peril. He thought how his name would be a power to-morrow on the great exchanges, not only of his own land, but of the world.

What did that girl mean with her laughing eyes and saucy tongue?

The man resumed his walk again, though it was long past his usual bedtime. His thoughts wandered off into distant years. He saw the pleasant old New England home, the great orchard, the stretch of meadow-land, where he had played in his boyhood. His heart leaned to them again. He saw the gentle mother, the brown-eyed sister so many years his junior. She had been the pet and joy of the household, especially after the father died — the strong, kindly man, carried off by a sudden illness when Tom had just passed his seventeenth birthday and the small sister her second.

The loss of his father had brought Tom to early maturity, and strengthened the virtues, as well as the faults, of his character. He was transformed from a mere boy to the head of the household.

Mrs. Calderwood followed her husband after twelve

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years, leaving the brother and sister alone with each other. Under his care Evelyn bloomed into fascinating girlhood. Old man as Tom Calderwood was, pacing the chamber that night, he felt he had never loved anything in the world as he had loved that young sister. She hovered about him with the gay sweetness, with all the bewitching charm of those old days. She adored Tom. He had been father and brother to her. She little dreamed of that iron will which formed the basis of his character. His wishes were always her law. She trusted his heart and wisdom absolutely.

Tom Calderwood's strongest pride and ambitions had centred on his sister. He had set his heart on her making a brilliant marriage. She had grown into beautiful womanhood when the struggle came which, though a prolonged one, ended at last in separating the two forever.

It was the old story. Evelyn's affections had not gone the way of her brother's choice, which had inclined to a wealthy suitor greatly her senior. Her brother was the more bent on this marriage because the property — not a large one — which her father left had all been consumed, and Evelyn Calderwood was virtually penniless.

Tom Calderwood learned to his immense amazement and indignation that the son of a physician in the neighborhood had won his sister's heart. The young man had never been a favorite with him.

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Calderwood regarded him with a certain contempt which the practical, unimaginative nature is apt to feel for its antithesis. All the admirable qualities of Evelyn's young lover were an offence in her brother's eyes. He denounced him to his sister with angry contempt, as "a visionary, a dreamer, one of those flaccid creatures, sure to come to wreck himself and bring everybody there allied to him."

But when argument and ridicule alike failed to move Evelyn Calderwood, the iron hardness, whose existence she had never suspected, came to light. Briefly and sternly her brother told her to choose between himself and another; but he warned her, if she married in opposition to his wishes, she must count the cost — he should wish never to look on her face again.

It was a terrible struggle, a prolonged one. Tom had been the pride and love of so many years! But the young woman had, under all her sweetness, the forces of her race. Her heart triumphed at last. She married the man she loved.

It was not in Tom Calderwood's nature to forgive one who had crossed him, and in this instance his affections had suffered a powerful wrench. He had counted on Evelyn's love and compliance as he had counted on the sun's rising.

Any efforts the young people made to placate him were simply ignored. Soon after their marriage, Calderwood, no longer a young man, and only thus

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far a moderate business success, went to California. This was in the late forties, and soon afterward, with the discovery of gold, he found his place and proved his mettle.

More than ten years later, business brought him to the East again. During this time no message had passed between himself and his sister. When she learned of his return, she wrote, entreating him by all the memories of their young lives to come to her.

He saw her but once. The interview was brief, formal on his part. The marriage had been one of rare congeniality and devotion on both sides. The home where he found Evelyn was a charming spot, a simple paradise. But all this could not reconcile Tom Calderwood to the marriage. She saw he had never forgiven her.

There was a niece in the cradle. She had looked up and smiled at the bearded stranger with the beautiful dark eyes of her mother. Two children had preceded her, both of whom died in their infancy.

Tom Calderwood and his sister never met again. Less than three years afterward he had received tidings of her death. A brief and perfunctory letter had passed between the husband and brother of the dead woman, and then all communication had ceased.

When, after many years, Tom Calderwood had learned of the death of his brother-in-law, he had intended to write to his niece. But the duty was a

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singularly unpleasant one when he came to face it. Her father's child could have no pleasant associations with the name of Tom Calderwood. There would be a ghastly formality in a letter of sympathy from him!

Of his niece herself the man knew absolutely nothing. He took it for granted she had been left in comfortable circumstances. He was forced to admit that Evelyn's husband had shown more practical sense than he had given him credit for possessing. "As for the daughter, she was a young woman now, and there was no reason why he should interfere with her life; she would probably marry one of these days, to suit herself, at least. A man was always a fool, and sure to get the worst of it, if he attempted to influence a woman when it came to her taking a husband." The relentless lines grew about Calderwood's mouth as he said this to himself.

But in a little while his thoughts had wandered again to the far past. He was living over the old days when he first came to California, and the Spaniard, stately, pompous, and picturesque, ruled the land. Then came the discovery of gold, and the wild rush to the Pacific coast. Tom Calderwood lived over all the fierce excitements of that time — the terrible hardships, the daily perils, the struggle and lust for gold, which hardened men's hearts and maddened their brains. He had borne his share in all that wild, greedy, clamorous life. Could it be

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possible that he, Tom Calderwood, had toiled for long days in heat and cold, washing his scant nuggets in the mountain streams, and using his pickaxe and shovel in the mines! He went over with his early successes. He saw how he had turned other men's weaknesses, wastefulnesses, necessities, to account; how, through everything, he had kept his eyes on the goal, held with iron tenacity to his purpose to be one of California's rich men.

And he had succeeded; he had succeeded many times over!

What an exciting life it had been! What keen foresight, what untiring vigilance, what knowledge of men, what seizing of chances, what caution and courage, had gone into the building of his fortunes! And now — was there a sweet mocking laugh in the air? Had it all come to this at last? Was it time to make his will?

Whenever this question came up, that baby face came up, too, which had smiled upon him from amid the soft cradle-laces almost a quarter of a century ago. An unusual softness grew about the man's heart. For the first time he admitted to himself he might have treated Evelyn with more consideration. Some scenes in their last interviews before her marriage smote his heart with a feeling of remorse. When he thought of her husband, even, it was with only a shadow of the old, bitter hostility.

"If he should die suddenly," he reflected, "this

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daughter of Evelyn's would be the heiress of all his millions!" He had thought of this sometimes, in a vague way, but now it came home to him with a new force. He felt a curious longing to know something of this girl — the last of his kin.

It was long past midnight when Tom Calderwood stepped to the window and looked out again on the night. He saw the watchman moving among the black shadows of the shrubberies, and along the blooming beds and borders. He saw the beautiful valley far below, drowned in that white, solemn moonshine; and standing there in the fragrant stillness, Tom Calderwood told himself that one of these days — as soon, indeed, as he could arrange some pressing business affairs — he would go East and see Evelyn's daughter.

After lunch that day, Mr. Calderwood had a game of whist in one of the parlors with some of the gentlemen whom he had invited to accompany him on his trip into Mexico. He had for his partner a celebrated physician from San Francisco.

When the game was over, Mr. Calderwood entered into conversation with this gentleman, while the party was awaiting the carriages which were to take them for a drive about Pasadena.

During a pause in the talk, which had been of the most general description, concerning the locale, its climate and products, Calderwood turned suddenly to his companion, and asked abruptly and seriously: —

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"Do I look like a man, Dr. Ellsworth, who ought to be in a hurry about making his will?"

The physician, a rather short, slender, grayhaired man, with a quiet manner and a penetrative glance, was a good deal surprised at this question; but he had quite too much professional *savoir faire* to betray it. He gazed at his companion a moment or two in that reflective silence which was his habit, before he replied: —

"I should not have thought, my dear sir, of suggesting anything of that sort, from your looks at this moment. May I ask what has put that idea into your head?"

Dr. Ellsworth had a large and very rich *clientèle* on the Pacific coast, but Mr. Calderwood had not belonged to it. In marked contrast to his usual habit, in a few terse sentences, and in a rather amused tone, Mr. Calderwood related the speech which he had overheard that morning.

The doctor joined in the laugh at the conclusion. But he was too shrewd a reader of human nature to be deceived by the jesting tone.

"There's no accounting for the tricks of young, feminine tongues," he replied. "Luckily for ourselves, we haven't all as sharp ears as yours, Mr. Calderwood. But I shall have to disagree with the young woman, unless you can give me some better reason for not doing so than your looks at the present moment."

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Perhaps the millionnaire understood that this was a tactful way of getting at further information; but he was disposed, on this occasion, to be confidential.

"I don't know that I can give you any special points for a diagnosis, doctor," speaking rather indifferently. "The most I can recall was an attack of — what shall I call it? — vertigo, more than a fortnight since."

"That is something which one is liable to from his cradle to his grave," following the lead adroitly. "Was there anything peculiar in this attack?"

"Not that I am aware of. My head has never been given to tricks of this sort. I was in my office, getting some telegrams off late in the afternoon. I had been having a busy morning. All of a sudden things began to whirl about me. It is just possible I lost consciousnesss for a half-minute or so. Everything cleared up in a short time, only it seemed — this may have been pure imagination — but I had an impression that the action of my heart was a little labored."

The light tone had disappeared. Both men had grown serious by this time.

"Have you had any recurrence of this attack?" asked Dr. Ellsworth.

"I am not sure of it. The thing was so unusual with me that it probably made a stronger impression. I have sometimes fancied I felt a slight return of the symptoms."

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"You were made of oak and iron, I see plainly, Mr. Calderwood. Come of stanch ancestral stock. Cut out to last a century. But it won't do for the strongest constitution to outrage nature too far."

"I suppose I have gone on as though I were not mortal," continued the millionnaire reflectively. "In my first years of California life I went through with what would have broken down twenty men of average stamina, and I got to taking it for granted I could stand anything."

"That is the way with men of your brain and vitality," added the physician lightly. "You can afford to take a little rest — give yourself a vacation — by this time."

"It isn't so easy to do that as a man in your profession might imagine."

There was a little unconscious tone of the great capitalist in the speaker's voice.

Dr. Ellsworth had moved a little nearer the window, where he obtained a clearer view of his companion's face. He saw now what it was that had occasioned the young woman's half-serious, half-jesting speech.

At this moment word was brought that the carriages were waiting.

As the famous physician went to join the party, he said to himself, —

"There's no telling. He may hold on for a decade

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or two yet, and he may go all to pieces any time. Symptoms might mean trouble or might mean nothing. That chit of a girl's talk has made him uneasy. He'd better slacken his pace a little. What can that rich old Crœsus want of any more millions!"

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XXXIV

THE FLOOD AT MOOSE FALLS

INTO these days at Old Lanes, steeped in sunshine and in dreamy, violet hazes, came up slowly, on gray wings, the equinoctial storm. Its clamoring winds lashed the air, its blinding rains scourged and tore the earth. There was hardly a rift in the thick, sullen gray overhead, hardly a pause in the raging of the winds, the beating of the rains, for three days and nights.

Marjorie Day was thrown altogether on the inner resources of Cameron Brae as she had never been before. But she found her new experience the reverse of depressing. She watched the opaque sky and listened to storming wind and rain with a certain exhilaration of soul and body.

Mrs. Cameron, who did not take kindly to gloomy weather, was cheered by the face which Marjorie brought each morning to her bedside. She felt Miss Day had become indispensable to her.

As the time approached for her to leave Cameron Brae, some thoughts of the future and of what she was going to do with that, occasionally came up to Marjorie. But she found it impossible to make any

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plans. She was surprised herself at her indifference. She could only fall back on the conviction that some new task must be awaiting her. It would probably be more in the line of her old tastes and habits. But she felt that this summer had been an invaluable experience.

"And there shall be a fresh task!" she said to herself. "I haven't yet the faintest inkling what it will be, of course; but I shall know and be better fitted now when the hour strikes — when the summons comes."

The fourth morning after the storm broke in azure and sunshine. Earth, air, and sky came out of the equinox into heavenly calm, into a divine peace and loveliness. During the storm Marjorie had often said to herself, —

"Moose Falls must be flooded. If I can only get there in time!"

Early in the afternoon she set out. The light alluvium of Old Lanes absorbed the rain quickly; but she had to make her way gingerly among pools and runlets on the low ground. At last she caught a far, heavy-volumed sound which increased as she drew nearer, until it shook the air with its massive, deafening roar.

Marjorie threaded her way down the bank among the tangled thickets, the drenched, torn underbrush. At last she stood still with a low, breathless cry. The flood was before her!

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All the swollen affluents and head-springs of Moose River were hurling themselves in ponderous, plunging masses, through that narrow, granite-walled water-way.

The first effect was that of a vast army pouring along, white-plumed, silver-bannered. The cascades, tenfold increased in volume, slid like great avalanches of snow over the terraces. The banks trembled with that mighty chorus of rejoicing streams. Marjorie stood in a little opening among the bushes, and watched the shouting floods as they swept past her. All the old landmarks, ledges, rocks, bowlders, where she had walked with young Elderby, were drowned now. She wished he could be here at this moment. How he would have delighted in all this wild jubilee of waters!

The sight, the sound, thrilled every nerve of Marjorie's being. She held her breath, as she had held it sometimes in a sudden burst of organ-music which rose and swelled, which billowed and soared, until it filled all the arches and groins of some vast cathedral with its flooding harmonies.

For an hour of that late afternoon, Marjorie had all this vision, these voices, to herself. The roads were hardly yet in a condition to tempt tourists from a distance. The hostelries, too, had been getting emptied within the last fortnight. The village-folk would hardly leave their own affairs to view the flood, even though it were such a one as had not lifted its

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voice between those rocks within the memory of man. The solitude, the awful grandeur of the scene, would, no doubt, have shaken Marjorie's nerves had she been on less familiar ground. She made some attempt to advance farther up the Falls, but the banks had been torn, the underbrush tangled and beaten down by the storm, and the way was, in places, blocked up. It was comparatively easy to follow the descent of the river toward the gorge which it entered with a deafening sea-like roar before it hurled itself down the steep into the pool below.

The granite walls which rose from the river-bed gradually approached each other, grew higher, and formed a narrowing channel for the current. Moose Falls, which spread themselves over the platforms and terraces, in such manifold, bewitching forms, were all gathered up and heaped together in the long, narrow throat of the chasm. It required considerable nerve, even when the water was at its ordinary level, to stand on the brow of the cliff and gaze into the boiling gulf. The ascent, however, on one side was not difficult. Ladies — escorted by gentlemen friends — frequently made it.

Marjorie had gone up here twice with Mr. Elderby. She had thought nothing of the climb, but he had warned her never to attempt it alone. The steadiest brain might grow suddenly dizzy, if it bent over that frightful chasm.

Marjorie Day had the courage of young, elastic

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nerves. Then she had been carried out of herself by the experiences of the last hour. She was in a glow of excitement and adventure when she reached the sombre, jagged rocks through the heart of which the flooded falls were plunging and raging.

"What a thing it would be to look down into that thundering, seething gulf! She would never have such another chance!"

The walls rose close by the bank along which Marjorie had come. There was nothing in the climb to daunt one so sure-footed, so steady-nerved, even though she was alone. The peril would come later, when she had reached the slippery brow of the cliff and was gazing down into that frightful, boiling gulf.

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XXXV

"JACK ELDERBY!" SHE SAID

A GREAT, blazing disk of sun was hanging near the edge of the horizon. A splendid, huge-framed bay thundered suddenly upon the bridge which spanned Moose River a little below the point where the waters widened and calmed after their plunge into the pool.

The rider was Jack Elderby. He had reached Red Ledge on the afternoon train, and an intense desire to see the Falls at flood had brought him to Old Lanes a little before sunset. The ride had been longer than he anticipated, but Hercules had carried him finely over the rain-gullied roads, and Jack's heart gave a throb of triumph as he caught the first far booming of the Fall. He wished Miss Day could be there, but he did not dream of her venturing out so soon after the storm.

As he reached the middle of the bridge, he drew rein and looked up the river. He had a momentary glimpse of the white, dazzling mass of waters; he heard the great flood fill the air with its thunderous pæan. The next instant a shiver crept through his

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nerves — a sick faintness went to the heart of the young, strong man; he had caught sight of that slender, gray-draped figure on the brow of the cliff. It stood there, drawn sharp and still against the azure sky, the savage rocks, the roaring waters. The next instant horse and rider were plunging over the bridge.

A stranger would have shuddered at the sight of that figure in its solitude and peril. A sudden dizziness, a heedless movement, and the woman standing there would lose her balance and go down into the gorge through which Moose River was hurling its flood.

The race — less than a quarter of a mile — was the swiftest Hercules had ever made. It seemed to Jack Elderby that each moment was making an old man of him. For he felt, in the passion of love and fear storming within him, that the life balanced on that edge of rock was dearer than his own; he knew in that flashing, revealing moment, that the supreme treasure of his heart — its hope and joy and tenderness, — were centred on the figure which he had caught sight of from the bridge.

Despite the tumult within him, the young man's thoughts and senses were all on the alert. He divined in a flash how it came about that Miss Day was in that mortal peril. She had reached the Falls; she had been drawn by the power of the scene to the gorge. It was a light thing for limbs so agile to

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climb the rocks, and, once on their brow, she had lost all sense of the danger.

Jack Elderby reached the bank at a point nearly opposite the gorge, and was off his horse in a flash. Hercules could only make slow progress through the thick, storm-beaten underbrush. His master tossed the rein over a cedar-clump and started for the rocks.

Marjorie Day suddenly felt arms closing, vise-like, around her. In the shock and fright she could not tell whether she was in a human grasp, or had been seized by some invisible force. Whatever it was, it was bearing her swiftly down the rocks. She made a helpless struggle or two.

Young Elderby shouted to her, but the cataract drowned his voice. When he bent his head over her, she caught his eyes. The reaction proved too much for her. For a few moments she lost consciousness.

Five minutes later the young people stood on a bit of level sward among a few young pines. Mr. Elderby had borne Miss Day down the rocks and up the bank, and across the road, into this shadowed wood-nook, before he released her. It would have been easy, he felt, to carry that light burden for miles. The strength of a giant beat in his pulses.

The young man and woman looked at each other without speaking a word. Then Marjorie heard a sob, that terrible sound when it is wrung out of a strong man's soul.

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"Oh, I can't bear it!" she exclaimed, with a sudden pleading little gesture. "I did wrong, I know," her sentences breaking out in staccato. "I did not realize what I was doing. Oh, don't look at me like that!"

"Look at you!" he answered. His voice shook with a kind of groan, and yet there was a thrill of unutterable tenderness through the words. "Do you know what it would have been to me if you had perished there as I saw you — oh, my God! — as I saw you from the bridge?"

"No, I don't."

Marjorie was so shaken by all which had passed she was not aware that she spoke at all.

"Well, *I* knew." The man's strong passion forced the swift speech from heart to lips. "It all came to me in a flash, but with an absolute force of conviction that years, centuries, could have made no stronger. I knew if you had disappeared down that gulf, my life would have gone with you — all that is sweetest and best and noblest in it. I knew then you were the life of my life."

The old, masterful tone was in his voice now.

Marjorie gave a little gasp. Her brain groped for words, but no syllable came.

Jack Elderby drew nearer to her.

"Marjorie," he said, "you are a good woman, the best woman I ever knew. I did not suppose, until I knew you, a woman so lovely in soul and flesh could

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exist. The simply knowing you, the feeling you are in the world, has made another man of me, and another thing of life. When I remember what you are, and what I am, I feel the gulf so great between us that I have no right to say these words to you. This morning I should as soon have dreamed of speaking them to an angel from heaven.

"Can't you put your hands in mine and say you forgive me?"

As she listened, a great sweetness grew into the words. An ineffable joy thrilled through her. What did it all mean?

Then she saw a change in the eyes which were looking down on her, into her soul. A great surprise grew there, — an unspeakable rapture.

But she did not put her hands in his.

"I don't know," she faltered. "I — I —" A stammering infant could have done better.

A quarter of an hour later Marjorie had found something to say. By this time the red gleams were fading on the pine-boles, and a brown dusk was growing in the aisles of the woods. The man and woman stood closer together, the gray hat a little above his broad shoulders. There was a new life in the faces of both. Marjorie was speaking. There was no faltering in her voice now.

"Do you understand what you are asking of me, Mr. Elderby? You know nothing about me. I am a

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stranger, virtually penniless, and so far as you are aware, friendless, in the world. Are you with your life and habits, your fastidious tastes and feelings, for I understand them perfectly, — are you, with your instincts and social training, asking me, just what I told you, — Mrs. Cameron's maid" —

"Stop, please!" he interrupted with masculine imperativeness. Then he drew back a step or two, and looked down on her. "I want you," he continued, "just as you stand there. My heart and my soul crave you for yourself simply, absolutely. As though it could be of the slightest consequence to me, whether you have a friend or a dollar in the world! Oh, can't you understand? I want you as a man wants the one woman he loves, to have in his life, to care for her, shelter her, live for her; if there is need, suffer for her. What is there under heaven," he continued, a passion of tenderness growing in his voice, "which with me could weigh anything to hearing you say once, and knowing your heart, — ah, your heart, Marjorie Day, went with the words, — Jack Elderby!"

There was a pause. The loud chant of the waters, a little way off, might have been the profoundest silence now. A belated shaft of sunset struck the pine-bole near which they stood, and made a red-gold mesh of the rings on Marjorie's brow. They stood for some moments, looking at each other, and a slow joy grew in Marjorie's heart, until it was

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flooded with a new life and bliss. Then she knew! The greatness of the moment calmed her. She drew close to the man; she laid her hand on his sleeve.

"Jack Elderby!" she said in her low, sweet contralto.

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XXXVI

HOURS AND LOVERS

THE next day, soon after lunch, young Elderby appeared at Cameron Brae. He had declared his intention to do this when Marjorie and he returned home in the gloaming. Hercules had followed meekly behind his master, who mounted him at Mrs. Cameron's gate.

"When we meet again, I will tell you all there is to tell about my life. You will learn then how I happened to come to Old Lanes. To-night I want things to remain just what they have been between us. It can never be quite the same after you know all," Marjorie concluded a little incoherently.

Jack understood, and was in no hurry for revelations. One consciousness brimmed that hour with rapture enough for him. Were low winds gossiping among the leaves over this secret? Was the air about them, the warm, sweet, September gloaming, thrilled with the joy and blessedness of this hour? But even to the woman walking at his side, the lover would not ask these questions. What he said, indeed, was wholly practical and to the point.

"I am not in the least impatient for further con-

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fidences, Marjorie. This hour is complete and perfect for me. Only one thing: I want your most solemn assurance that you will never, under any circumstances, go out on that ledge again."

Marjorie's laugh was a peal of merriment, and yet it was threaded with a little tremulousness.

"As though I had not given you that promise four times already, and in the most solemn manner too!"

"Do forgive me! But you could not see yourself as I saw you when I paused on the bridge. I shall be seeing that sight at times all my life."

"Oh, don't, please! But I think you have made me see my rashness, and feel sufficiently remorseful over it, too. Yet it did not seem in the least perilous when I climbed the cliff; and once on the top, who would not have been lost to everything but that scene?"

So the next day, with a lover's promptness, young Elderby appeared at Cameron Brae. It would, of course, have been unpardonable not to inquire for its mistress. Jack had his usual welcome from Mrs. Cameron and a pleasant call, extending to nearly an hour. Marjorie was in the room part of the time.

When he rose to leave he asked Mrs. Cameron's permission to visit the grounds again, if Miss Day, he added, would be kind enough to accompany him. The lady assented graciously.

After rambling a little while among the grounds, the two sought a pretty, vine-shadowed corner, with

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some rustic seats, where they settled themselves. The world was a new world to the eyes of these young people. Their love — its mystery, its bliss — had transfigured everything.

This was one of the things Jack said: "I am sure I must have fallen in love with you, Marjorie, the first time I heard you speak; only I was such a hopeless idiot, I did not know it. Besides, the idea would have seemed sacrilege to me just then."

And a little later Marjorie in her turn said, "To think that twenty-four hours ago I did not dream I should ever care for you like this! It was such an infinite surprise to me at first. It seems as though it must have happened years ago, and that all my life had led up to it, — just. But the wonder is that I am sitting here and calling you Jack Elderby, and that it should seem the most natural thing in the world! I suppose it must have been written ages ago in the book of our fates."

His gaze devoured her as she sat there in one of the white dresses of soft, clinging stuff which she wore when the days were warmest. How fair she was in her lover's eyes! How fresh and stimulating he found her talk, with all its gay and grave surprises! What was he, to win such a woman?

He thought of Grace Halifax, and again the contrast between the two young women forced itself strongly upon him. Before he knew, he was asking himself what generous inspiration, what high thought,

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what noble purpose, she would ever breathe into a man. And, his discernment made more penetrating by the finer loveliness before him, he saw that superb, sensuous beauty lacked some informing power, some life and charm, which heart and soul can alone impart to a woman's face.

During this afternoon, Marjorie Day kept her promise. She related her past to young Elderby. Of course this verbal autobiography was a mere sketch. It would take a lifetime of precious companionship to fill that out. But he learned the main features of Marjorie Day's life, much as you, my reader, have learned them. She dwelt long upon the happy though unmothered girlhood at Sea Knolls. She described her father — his character, his life — with her tender, vivid touches; and long before she was through, Jack Elderby felt he knew and loved the man — Stephen Day.

She told, too, of the happy life abroad, and more briefly of the shadowed time that followed; her very reticence giving this a deeper significance for her hearer. When it came to the Briarsley days and her illness, it was inevitable that Dr. Amoury and Mrs. Ainslee should occupy the foreground. When the circumstances and motives which had influenced her in coming to Cameron Brae had their turn, she went into ampler details. Jack Elderby should see that no light whim, no mere desire for novelty or sensation, had induced her to take this step.

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"I am not fond of mysteries," she concluded. "But I was forced to make one of this or give up the coming. There was not the faintest romance about the whole matter, you see; though my friends, I believe, expect something of that sort."

"I see how perfectly the purpose, and the carrying it out, was in harmony with all I have learned of you, Marjorie. But I cannot think of that now. I can only think how different a thing life would have been to me if you had not come to Old Lanes."

Some talk of the future followed later. Marjorie told how Dr. Amoury was to come for her in less than a month. She would be at Mrs. Ainslee's for a while, where some of her friends would join her.

But in talk of the future, the man had a larger share than the woman. He had a man's impatience, too, for the consummation of his happiness. On this topic he was eloquent, as I suppose lovers will be as long as stars shine and seas roll.

He had, too, something to tell of his life, feeling that the story of the woman by his side rebuked his own past.

"He could not promise her a splendid home, though she would adorn a palace" —

Marjorie interrupted him there.

"I never had the faintest desire for a palace. When I was abroad I found out just what splendid, cheerless places they were. They have given me a distaste for the American imitation."

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"Then," he continued, largely in jest, "there are always the cattle and fruit ranches 'out West' in reserve for a fellow who has made a fiasco for any reason on his own coast. But how could he ask an angel to go out there and rough it with him?"

"I can't answer for the angel," said Marjorie, with an arch uplift of her eyebrows. "But I do know there is one woman ready to go to the ends of the earth with you, Jack Elderby!"

"And it was only twenty-four hours," Marjorie thought again, "and they were talking like this!"

"And your sister, Hester — Mrs. Wilmarth?" Marjorie said, during their talk; for her name often came up when he spoke of the past. "Are you alike?"

"Hardly, I think. Of course we are very fond of each other, in our way. Poor Hester! I give her endless trouble, for we do not always — perhaps not often — agree."

"If she should be sorry for your choice!"

The words trembled on Marjorie's lips. They did not cross them, but from that hour she understood Hester Wilmarth.

The two went to the great gate while the day was closing in the west in a splendor of crimson and gold. Horse and rider, as she watched them move away, formed once more a striking group against the sunset.

All her woman's tenderness — the stronger because

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its head springs had not been wasted on light fancies — went out to this brave, forceful manhood, which had taken her heart, as it were, by storm.

Marjorie Day said to herself, as she went up to the house, —

"How glad I am — how I thank God that I came to Old Lanes!"

Mrs. Cameron, meanwhile, was occupied with some reflections which interfered a good deal with her letter-writing that afternoon. Mr. Elderby's invitation to Miss Day had given her a new idea — not an agreeable one. Accustomed to the homage of men, until she had retired from the world, she had taken it for granted that his visits were solely for her sake. Her self-love was wounded to find this was not the case. Young Elderby had aroused a deeper interest in the proud and lonely woman's feelings than any man had done for years. This was owing partly to his personal qualities, partly to his associations with the memories of her youth.

Mrs. Cameron could not, of course, suspect the motives which had induced the son of his father to seek her acquaintance in the first place; but she had a resentful feeling toward Miss Day. That young woman had, it appeared, whether designedly or not, appropriated something which belonged of right to herself. She was not in a mood now to ignore any of the facts of Marjorie's position.

"It was unfortunate from the first," she said to

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herself, as she laid down her pen. "But there seemed no choice when I introduced them that day. The young man naturally took her for my guest. Everything about her would bear out that conclusion. But things may be getting serious now. I cannot, of course, sit still and see my old friend's son caught under my roof, in any unfortunate entanglement. My duty is plain. I must seize the first opportunity to explain Miss Day's real position. It is not altogether roseate, as I am learning, to have a lady for a maid."

There was some chilliness in Mrs. Cameron's manner at dinner. It might have struck Marjorie, had her thoughts been less engaged with the events of the afternoon.

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XXXVII

A LETTER, OR — A MIRACLE?

LATE the next day Marjorie returned from a walk among the village lanes. She had promised Mr. Elderby she would not visit Moose Falls during his absence.

She found a letter on her table. It had been forwarded, like all her correspondence, from Dr. Amoury. The handwriting, in large, masculine style, was not familiar.

The letter proved a long one — covering several business sheets. Marjorie's breath came faster, and the faint color left her cheeks; but she read on, like one under a spell, to the end.

Then she rose, with white lips, pushing the hair from her forehead in a bewildered way.

"Of course it is a dream," she murmured to herself. "No such thing could possibly have happened. I shall wake up, and laugh and wonder in a little while, because it all seemed so — so real."

She walked from one room to another, and once she said to herself in a pathetic kind of tone, —

"If I could only wake up!"

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Then she glanced at the letter which lay on the sofa-cushion, and she saw a sunbeam, deep-red, had slid across the paper. Something that was half a shudder went over her.

When the summons came to dinner, Marjorie went down as usual. It seemed to her the hours of that evening would never wear away, though she exacted from each rebellious nerve and fibre the full measure of her ordinary service.

As she was arranging Mrs. Cameron's hair for the night, the lady asked with some concern, —

"Are you not feeling well, Miss Day? Your hands are cold."

"Thank you, I am not in the least ill."

If this reply hardly satisfied Mrs. Cameron, she said nothing further.

When Marjorie reached her room that night she was too tired for any exertion, any feeling even. She went to the locked drawer where she had placed the letter, and gazed at it curiously a minute or two. "In the morning, when I wake up," she said, addressing the letter as though it were something sentient, "I shall know whether you are a dream."

She awoke to find the sunshine flooding her chamber. The air outside was all astir with scents and songs with fresh life of the young day. Marjorie raised her head and listened, and gazed about her.

"No, it was not a dream," she said to herself in a low, awed voice; and then the long tension broke, and a sob wailed through the chamber.

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"There was nothing to be done," she kept telling herself later, "until Jack Elderby should come." He was to return to Boston the morning after they parted, and must be absent three days.

Mrs. Cameron observed Miss Day rather curiously, and thought her paler than usual.

After her tasks were done, she returned to her room. A letter was awaiting her from Jack Elderby; brief, hurried, informing her that it would be impossible for him to return until a day later than he had promised. He wrote full of a lover's impatience over this detention.

But the disappointment came at first near breaking Marjorie down. It seemed ages before he would come; ages, that she must carry the burden of that great secret which pressed so heavily upon her, which filled all the air about her.

Marjorie Day went about during these three days, a little quieter, a little paler, than usual. Anybody who knew her intimately would have perceived that something had stirred her nature to its depths. But nobody at Old Lanes was likely to suspect this, or to imagine that young, quiet woman stood on the threshold of a new future — a future whose issues might well have shaken the nerves of the strongest man. A new light gradually grew in her face. It was not wholly the light of love, of hope, of joy. There was a solemn shining in the sea-gray deeps of her eyes. One who looked far into that shining might have

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learned that some high purpose, some strenuous resolve, underlay it.

She wandered about the grounds and the dreamy old roads. The landscape wore the soft pensiveness of the late September. The heart and brain of that young, solitary woman were all awake and busy during these days; but the presence of those who could not understand, and who would not sympathize, had become alien and oppressive to Marjorie Day.

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XXXVIII

"SIXTY MILLIONS"

On the fourth afternoon, Miss Day went to Moose Falls. She had agreed to meet Mr. Elderby at the cascade. A call at Cameron Brae would have involved a visit with its mistress when moments were precious. Besides, there was a sense of freedom and restfulness amid this wild nature, which they could not feel amid the more elegant precincts.

The waters had, by this time, returned to their normal level. The cascade was singing the song of unnumbered summers as joyfully as though it had not thundered over the terrace in the wild fury of the flood. The scent of dying blooms was in the air. Ghosts of winds haunted the pines. There was a rich garnet bloom in the top of a maple. A yellow sheaf shone in an oak. The great wave of color which follows the autumnal Equinox was breaking upon the land.

Early as it was in the afternoon, Marjorie found young Elderby awaiting her with eyes full of that tenderness which a man's eyes can hold for only one woman in the world.

He seated her on the bench of rocks under the

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pine, and stretched his tall length on the needles at her feet.

"They have been only four days, my Marjorie, but they have seemed very long ones," he said.

"They have been long to me too."

In the pause which followed, he gazed at her intently. At last he spoke suddenly, anxiously:

"Something has happened to you, Marjorie."

"Yes," her lips quivered; her voice broke for a moment. "It has seemed a miracle. I have had to bear it all alone — all alone!"

The last words were a pathetic cry.

The sound filled him with vague alarm. It was no ordinary thing which could have wrung that cry from her lips.

"Why didn't you telegraph?" he exclaimed. "I would have thrown up everything and hurried to you."

"I thought of doing that. But I waited. It was very hard at first."

While she was speaking, she drew a letter from her pocket and placed it in his hands.

With a man's habit, he scrutinized the outside; then, with an interrogative glance, to which she bowed her head, he opened the letter. He read it carefully; he read it twice; every syllable.

When he looked up he too had grown pale.

"Marjorie," he said under his breath, "this — this staggers me!"

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"I thought at first it was a dream. I thought so until I awoke the next morning. That was three days ago. I have been trying to get used to it ever since."

Jack Elderby sprang to his feet, drew a long breath, and squared his shoulders, much as a man does at the approach of his foe.

"But this is a colossal fortune!" he said. "It is simply stupendous!" glancing at the letter. "It makes you the richest woman in America, I should think — certainly, one of the rich women of the world."

She cried out sharply now. "That was just what papa said he had no wish I should ever be."

There was a little pause, and then Jack Elderby said in an undertone, as though he were trying to make the words clear to his own consciousness, —

"Sixty millions! Sixty millions!"

"Those words have been ringing in my thoughts ever since the letter came. They seemed to mean a great avalanche of wealth under which I must be crushed."

Jack Elderby looked down on the graceful, gray-draped figure at his feet.

Strong as he was — ready to face emergencies, in the vigor of his splendid young manhood, — the thought of this vast wealth almost took his breath away.

His first impulse was to turn to the past, to their old relations.

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"Marjorie," he said, the deep voice a good deal tremulous now, "I have been thinking of you, every instant of you, since we parted. These four days have been the happiest — if the humblest — of my life. I meant to atone — so far as a man could — for the old indolence and self-indulgence. You have made me see things in such different lights now. Yet I have been braver and stronger than ever before. It seemed to me, I could challenge, wrestle, conquer, the whole world, for your sake. And the very heart and bliss of all has been my dream of a home, a pleasant, sheltered nest, where I could place the woman so unutterably precious to me; and lo! I have come here to-day to find her transformed into — what this letter tells me."

While he spoke, a great joy grew in her eyes. Her whole uplifted face was radiant with pride and tenderness.

"That is the very heart of all my happiness," said Marjorie Day, while every syllable throbbed with exultation. "You knew nothing about this fortune. You took me for what I had told you I was."

"And it is that only I wish you were at this moment. Forgive me, dear. Perhaps I shall feel differently to-morrow, and be able to congratulate you."

Jack Elderby was a man, and his nerves steadied sooner than Marjorie's from their shock of surprise. He never once imagined that he might be dreaming,

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though he did think the suddenness with which all this wealth had fallen to Marjorie outrivalled the fairy legends, the classic myths, the old Aladdin stories, of his boyhood.

At last he threw himself on the ground again.

"Can it be the heiress of sixty millions is sitting beside me?" He regarded her gravely.

"The letter says so."

"And I know about the man who wrote it. He is the head partner of one of the most solid and extensively known law firms in San Francisco. He is not a man to overstate facts. The trustees and executors are men, too, whose standing in the financial world is unquestioned."

A little later he said, "Of course I have heard your uncle's name, Marjorie, as that of one of the richest men on the California coast. His wealth, it appears by this letter, greatly exceeded what those best acquainted with his affairs estimated it. But you never spoke of this uncle when you told me of your past."

"I did not associate him with it. That makes it all seem more as if this grand fortune had fallen from heaven; if grand fortunes," her smile glancing out faintly and then vanishing, "ever do come from that source! But I knew of his existence. I should have told you some time."

"Have you ever seen him?"

"They tell me I have. I was in my cradle then.

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He was mamma's only brother. He came to see her when he returned from California. That was the summer before she was taken ill."

Marjorie proceeded to relate her uncle Tom Calderwood's history, so far as she was familiar with it. Of the later years, she knew little, except what she had learned from public report and newspaper paragraphs. She had gathered through her father a clear idea of her uncle's character, — its marked qualities, its indomitable energy, its iron will. She understood perfectly the reasons of his opposition to his sister's marriage with young Day, and why his anger had been so relentless and prolonged.

"Uncle Tom started for California," she continued, "a year after my parents' marriage. Papa doubted whether he had any definite idea of remaining there at that time. But he had found his chance for making a grand fortune. He showed at last that he had the true business genius, and soon became absorbed in amassing wealth. You see to what a huge aggregate it has grown. Yet papa, who never had so many thousands as he had millions, always spoke of him as 'poor Tom.' To think of his dying there in his beautiful villa at San Rafael, with only the niece, who had never known him, to leave all that wealth to! It seems such a pitiful ending."

"It does to you — to me. But the world will think of all those millions, and regard your uncle as a gigantic success. You know that, Marjorie."

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"I know it. It makes the pitifulness greater." Then she went on in a moment. "He had been thinking about me — intending to come East and see me — the letter says, you remember. But it appears he had never been quite so well since his return from a trip which he took last winter into Mexico. At that time I must have been lying almost mortally ill at Briarsley."

"I can never forget," she added, in a low voice which quivered and had often to pause and steady itself, "some of Uncle Tom's last speeches. There was one especially:

"'I should like to make up to Evelyn's daughter for some things — long ago — connected with her mother. I see them in another light now.'

"Then that other message whispered to his lawyer a little before the last unconsciousness:

"'Tell my niece to do some good with this money — some good I have failed of doing.'

"And it is all mine now," she was saying to herself mournfully, "all but a few legacies which he has left to some people who had long served him."

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XXXIX

ONE OF THE WORLD'S RICH WOMEN

IT was inevitable that the talk between the young people should turn at last to affairs which were immediately pressing. Mr. Elderby led the way.

"Have you considered all there is to be done now, Marjorie? Not an hour should be lost."

"I see that perfectly. I have only waited for you to come. You must advise me — aid me. It is so fortunate you are a lawyer, and know just the steps to take at this time. I have no knowledge, no experience, in matters of this kind. You must tell me what to do."

"The will, it appears, has not been probated yet?"

"No. That is most fortunate. One has time to draw a breath before the newspapers and the great public get hold of matters. How I dread the clamor of tongues which must follow! Of course there are a few people who will be glad for my sake, but the others — the majority — will covet this immense fortune which has come to me, will wonder why I should have been so supremely fortunate, why they could not have had a share in it."

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"There is no doubt of that, Marjorie. You will be thought the luckiest of mortals. People will hold their breaths when they speak of you. I wonder if there is another woman on this planet who would learn with a look like that in your eyes at this blessed moment, that she was the heiress of sixty millions!"

She made a little, deprecatory gesture.

"If the figures weren't so dizzying! They frighten one. I believe now, I could have taken half a million, or perhaps a whole one, with tolerable composure."

"But the larger sum is not your fault. That is consoling. You will not let yourself be miserable over these millions, Marjorie."

"I don't intend to be, certainly. But one needs a little time to rally — to gather one's self up after such an overwhelming surprise. I can't divest myself, either, of one feeling."

"What is that, please?"

"That there is a smack of vulgarity, a kind of — what shall I say? — ostentation, in the very name of such a fortune. When I regard it, in connection with myself solely, I can only think of a woman in a barbaric blaze of jewels;" and she laughed and winced a little. "Do the best men, — I mean the men who are the world's real benefactors, — the men of noble characters and aims, ever devote their lives to building up a fortune of this sort? Would my father have done it? Yet how immensely

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in moral and mental stature, he towers to my thought, above poor uncle Tom Calderwood! How infinitely richer his life seems! Perhaps it is shamefully ungrateful to say all this now he has made me heiress," she concluded with a swift compunction in her voice and look.

There was no time to be lost. It was settled between the two that Mr. Elderby should telegraph to San Francisco on his return to Red Ledge. By this means he hoped to secure a delay in the publication of the will until he should himself appear on the spot.

The young man, with his trained professional knowledge, saw how imperative it was that he should start for California within forty-eight hours. He had a large confidence in the ability of the men to whom Mr. Calderwood had intrusted the carrying-out of the provisions of his will; but it was of the first consequence he should confer with them in Marjorie's interests.

Jack reflected that business would probably keep him in California a fortnight, and the trip, going and returning, would consume nearly as much time. It seemed a hard fortune that they must be separated at this crisis, but with such vast interests at stake, neither could hesitate. He congratulated himself that he was too well known in San Francisco to need introductions. Miss Day would, of course, invest him with authority to act for her.

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She decided that she would return to Mrs. Ainslee's in a few days. This resolve met with young Elderby's entire approval. He felt that she needed the support of such a presence and sympathy as Dr. Amoury's would prove at this crisis.

"I cannot write him what has happened," said Marjorie. "I must wait until I see him."

Amid all this rapid arrangement of plans and details, there came occasional brief pauses in the talk. During one of these Marjorie turned suddenly to her companion, and said, with that little, earnest vibration in her voice, behind which always lay some deeper meaning, "There is one question you have not asked me. It is the most serious of all."

"I can't imagine what it is."

"It is what I am going to do with all this money."

"I see. Have you decided, Marjorie?"

"I am not going, if possible, to be ingulfed by it. I do not mean to change the ideas and aims of my life, because I have suddenly become one of the world's rich women. I will not have my heart and soul mortgaged to Uncle Tom's millions. Of course, I know perfectly what this wealth could do for me, if I chose to make myself the centre of it. What a place I could take now in the world of fashion! I could set myself apart in splendor and pomp like a born princess. What a palace I could have in the city, what splendid piles in the country, with sumptuous furnishings, armies of servants, liveried attend-

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ants, with endless horses and carriages! I could give gorgeous entertainments, and see my name in the papers almost as often as the President's wife. I could be resplendent with jewels that an Empress might envy, and wear dresses that would each cost a small fortune. If there is anything sixty millions would not do for me, I cannot imagine it. The world could be ransacked to minister to my pleasures, my luxuries, my vanities. How the crowd would stare and envy! What secret bitterness and heartburning would underlie all the smiles and homage! What an empty, ignoble sort of life it all seems!"

"I quite agree with you."

"But that sort of life does have irresistible attractions for most persons. How often I have wondered when I read in the newspapers the names of women, leaders in society, with the cut of their dresses, the cost of their diamonds, the splendor of their parties! 'Do you really find your account in all that?' I have asked myself.

"And now the test has come to me, I shall have less excuse than others if I go the old way. I was brought up in an atmosphere of noble thoughts, of large humanities, of altruistic ideas. I cannot bring myself to regard this grand fortune in any light but that of a solemn trust, a vast responsibility for others."

"I should have known, without your telling me, you would have looked at the fortune in that way."

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"Should you? I am not sure of that myself, if I had never come to Old Lanes. The experience has been just what I needed, what I should otherwise have lacked. How could I, nested in love and care all my life, have entered into the feeling of the self-helpers, the wage-takers? One must *live* a thing to know what it means.

"At Cameron Brae, the circumstances have, in my case, been exceptional. They would form no rule for another. I succeeded in pleasing Mrs. Cameron, but even that would not have made all the difference, if I had not come here under Dr. Amoury's ægis. Mrs. Cameron submitted to certain drawbacks, as she has put it to herself, in having a lady about her, in order to retain my services. But she never quite forgot my position. I did not know you could look so fierce! Really, I never blamed her. Indeed, I have often found myself excusing her feeling, remembering her ideas and prejudices.

"But what a different thing it would have been had I come here like those who came before and must come after me! Mrs. Cameron would have regarded me, at best, as an upper servant, as a creature at an infinite remove from herself. All this, carried to extremes, may be very *un*-American, and she is, and makes a point of it sometimes, a daughter of the Republic. Are you only waiting for a chance to assure me it was less Dr. Amoury than something in myself which made all the difference in the world in

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Mrs. Cameron's behavior? I can't agree with you, altogether. But so much is certain: I have been one of the wage-takers; I belong to their class; I know how they feel."

"You make those last points well, Marjorie. A socialist would applaud them."

A double laugh came in here, followed by some bright talk, half serious, half bantering.

Then Marjorie resumed, following the suggestion of young Elderby's last remark; "I can hear papa's voice speaking now: —

"'That vast question of capital and labor is in the foreground of this closing century. The twentieth will have that to face — to solve, possibly, though that is expecting a great deal of one hundred years. What work there is ahead for the boys lying in their cradles now, while we old fellows are shuffling off the stage! But we have had a glimmer of the dawn on the hills. It is worth while to have lived, — even for that!'

"But that day of which papa talked with such profound conviction is still far off, and here am I with sixty millions to make the world of my own time a little better and happier. Then, when one thinks how all this vast fortune was made; not dishonestly, of course, as the world goes. I do not believe there was a man living who could legally charge uncle Tom with defrauding him. But of course, he did not amass all that wealth without

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coolly driving others to the wall, without taking pitiless advantage of men's ignorance, misfortunes, necessities. How many a man must have been driven to despair in that fierce struggle of the stock exchange, — how many a home must Uncle Tom have darkened, how many hopes and fortunes must he have wrecked, while he was heaping up his own riches! I cannot forget all this. Is not this an added reason why I should share the money with others? And there are so many who need help! They come up before me, as I have known — have heard of them — the old, the young, the spent, the wronged, the struggling, and those others dragged down to the depths of poverty, misery, sin. I think of all the young lives which can be rescued and made sweet and glad and useful to the world. I think of the little children in the great cities, in the dreadful slums, — my heart has ached for them all this summer. They shall have their chance — hundreds, thousands, I hope — when other summers come, — have the wide, sweet skies over them, and the green woods and the birds and the wild flowers about them. Then there are so many beautiful and noble charities, crippled, languishing, paralyzed! How delightful it will be to give these new life! Is there any end to the good sixty millions can do — the cares it can relieve — the happiness it can bestow? Did ever another woman have such a chance as I? How small the ego seems, how paltry the thought of one's own

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personal gratifications and luxuries, beside this helping and blessing so many others!"

Her voice faltered. A fine, slow wave of color had risen and burned in her cheeks.

Jack Elderby leaned over her. He did not speak, but she saw the look in his eyes. In that larger moment, Marjorie had a more vivid sense than ever before of all this strong, manly, helpful presence would be in her life, — something always to trust in, lean against, thank God for.

Her lips quivered. "You will help me, Jack," she entreated, "to carry out my plans? You will hold me, if I should falter, to my ideals?"

There was a little silence. When he spoke, his voice had the solemnity of one who takes a vow to his own soul: —

"I promise you, Marjorie, that you shall have my best wisdom, my best counsel, in every generous effort, every noble purpose, to which you devote this fortune. But your appeal is a terrible rebuke to me. It is like an angel from Heaven beseeching a very imperfect mortal for aid to live to all fine and noble issues. The one good thing about me appears just this: I recognized the best when I saw it."

"You shall not underrate yourself in that way," said Marjorie, with a woman's inveterate habit of idealizing the man whom she loves. "How many men would have borne the test as you did that day when I told you what I was, at Cameron Brae?

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And afterward — never once a glance, a tone, a word, reminded me! Of course you do not see yourself a hero. The real heroes never do that. But haven't I the instincts of a woman? Don't I know, Jack Elderby?"

"Of course all that is immensely gratifying from the lips of a woman a man loves, Marjorie. He knows all the time just how much he deserves it — that it is simply the reflection of her own character which she sees in him. Women of your quality are given to illusions. The danger is, they may make conceited idiots of the creatures they idealize."

Marjorie took him up there promptly.

"You talk of idealizing! As though you weren't yourself doing that in the most unconscionable way! You think I am an embodiment of all that poets have dreamed of perfect womanhood. Your imagination is just making out of one weak and faulty woman a kind of goddess."

"It amuses me to hear you go on in that way, Marjorie. But I should like to know how many women there are on this planet, who, in your circumstances, would have chosen to come to Old Lanes this summer — like to know how many would have taken your uncle's fortune in the spirit you have!" He thought of his sister — of Grace Halifax. "But haven't I a man's instincts? Don't I know Marjorie Day?"

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They looked at each other a moment, and then burst simultaneously into a laugh in which the young woman's joyous sweetness threaded itself among the man's bass, and the cascade mingled its thronging, manifold sounds with the human voices.

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XL

LOVE IS BEST

THAT night as Marjorie Day was arranging Mrs. Cameron's hair, it flashed across her that the lady would be supremely amazed if she could learn that the young woman assiduously waiting on her was the heiress of sixty millions. It would be as impossible for Mrs. Cameron to enter into Marjorie's feeling about the fortune, as it would for her to understand the motives which had brought her to Old Lanes.

The time, however, was come now to speak. After her tasks were finished, Marjorie informed Mrs. Cameron that circumstances had occurred which would compel her to leave Old Lanes in a few days.

There was a little silence. When Mrs. Cameron spoke, her tone was one of chagrin, almost consternation.

"I am much surprised and disappointed by what you have told me, Miss Day."

"I am sorry to give you the slightest annoyance, Mrs. Cameron. I hope you have now known me long enough to feel assured of that."

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"Yes. Has anything happened to annoy you?"

"No; I assure you, I leave at this time simply on account of the circumstances to which I alluded. You know, our arrangement was a wholly provisional one."

"Yes, I know. If" — the lady spoke with some hesitancy, "any larger compensation would induce you to remain?"

"I have always felt I was paid more than my services warranted. I could not possibly consent to receive anything more."

Changes in her attendants always irritated Mrs. Cameron's nerves. She was conscious that she could not supply Miss Day's place. She wished to put off the evil hour as long as possible. She represented the difficulties in the way of securing an attendant at once. She tried to prevail upon Marjorie to remain a month longer; and the proud woman condescended to place the matter in the light of a personal favor to herself.

Marjorie hesitated at last. Mrs. Cameron had been kind to her. She would be glad to oblige her. She reflected that the quiet life, the daily tasks at Cameron Brae, might calm and brace her for the inevitable changes and excitements which were awaiting her when her friends — when the world — learned what had happened.

"After all," she reasoned, "why should she be in such a hurry to break off her old life, as though it

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were something she were glad to be rid of? Why could she not content herself to remain here until Dr. Amoury came for her, as she had first resolved?" The long walks in the growing autumn coolness, the occasional talks with Donil Kemp, the drowsy old town, began to acquire that heightened charm which last pleasant things always have for the imagination.

But there was Jack Elderby! He certainly had a right to be consulted before she reached a decision.

The result of all this was that Marjorie at last told Mrs. Cameron she would not now name the day for her departure. If it were possible she would postpone it. With this assurance the lady was obliged to remain content.

In the alarm over losing Miss Day, Mrs. Cameron quite lost sight of the resentful feeling she had of late cherished toward the young woman.

After she returned to her room, Marjorie sat long at her window, watching the landscape on which the moonlight lay in white drifts. She saw the sky, all its cloudless deeps, thick-sown with stars.

She remembered it was that "harvest moonlight" in which she and her father had so often walked together. What would he have said, had he known that all his care and training were fitting her to be the disburser of Uncle Tom's millions! She knew her father must have thought his brother-in-law would carry his displeasure to the grave — that he would never name Stephen's Day's daughter in his

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will. She remembered he had once said to her, "Perhaps it will be better in the end, Marjorie, that I can leave you with something less than fifty thousand dollars, though I once had larger ambitions for you. The advantage is, you will not be a great bait for the fortune-hunters. The drawback is the difficulty of carrying on Sea Knolls comfortably with the income you will have."

"But I will cling to the old home-roof if I have to live in a corner and on a crust!" Marjorie had answered with the boundless confidence of youth. "Only, of course, if you weren't here, papa, I could never bring my mind to living at all."

"It isn't a matter of making up one's mind when it comes to the living. Perhaps you will find that out some day, my child."

She remembered the solemn look in his eyes, and she knew he was thinking of her mother.

It came to her in a flash. She sprang from the window and began to pace the room, heart and brain in a tumult of joy. She would have Sea Knolls back again — the dear old home where she had first seen the light, where she had lived through so many happy years! Would she really be mistress again of the wide, restful rooms, each one of which was to her sacred and fragrant with memories and associations? She thought of the ancient garden with its flower-beds and fruit-trees. Would it be her own again? Would she wander in the green, dreamy, sweet-

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scented orchard ways? Would she climb the Knolls when days were fairest, and look far off to the line of dim, gray sea? This was almost the first personal indulgence she had thought of in connection with her new fortune. Her heart and imagination fairly gloated over this idea.

Sea Knolls had been the gift of her paternal grandfather to his son. That was all his slender means could afford the young pair. The land had been in his family for generations. The house was large, solid, with a broad façade, a high slope of roof, and ample rooms and halls, much after the Colonial fashion.

So Marjorie had inherited her love for Sea Knolls. Her father and she had spent hours devising improvements, enlargements, additions to the place, "if the ship of their fortunes should ever come richly freighted into port." They would have a large wing on one side of the house, and balconies, verandas, bay-windows, on the other. Once she had made a sketch of the house as it would be with all these changes and enlargements, and showed it to her father. He had looked at it long and curiously.

"That would be very handsome, my dear. I confess I should enjoy it," he said. "But the cost — there's the rub! We shall have to put up with the old place, Marjorie. After all, it's good enough for two people."

"I should think so. Besides, being the best place in the world too!"

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After her father's death she had come across this sketch one day. The sight gave her such a pang that her first impulse had been to throw it into the flames. But something restrained her. She had packed the sketch away with other treasures and belongings when the time came to leave Sea Knolls.

She would have the house changed and enlarged in accordance with that sketch. All the improvements and expansions should follow, as far as possible, the lines of that model. Her thoughts and fancies, woman-like, busied themselves the next hour in devising furnishings and harmonious adaptations for each room.

As soon as Mr. Elderby returned from California she would have him arrange for the purchase of the old estate. Some day they would live there together. She laughed and flushed when she thought of that.

Then she thought of her uncle, with some new tenderness this time. Her associations with his name during his life could not have been pleasant. Her father seldom spoke of his brother-in-law. He had darkened several years of Stephen Day's youth. Marjorie was aware, though her father never said it in so many words, that he believed the long struggle through which Evelyn had gone first developed the disease which later had ended her life.

The knowledge of the fortune which Tom Calderwood had left his niece had been accompanied with a shock of surprise, a sense of responsibility, which

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had left at first little room for delight in that vast bequest. But with the idea of possessing Sea Knolls once more, a new feeling of gratitude toward her dead kinsman filled Marjorie's heart. That would be Uncle Tom's gift. If she could only thank him! To think how he had been toiling and vexing his soul all these years to heap up these millions for herself! She wished she could have been there and whispered in his ear, before death had dulled it, that his last wish should be sacredly regarded. His money *should* make hearts glad and lives brighter.

As she said this the tears were in her eyes and on her cheeks, for Tom Calderwood.

Then she came back to the window and sat there in the great white wave of moonshine. In a little while she was thinking of Jack Elderby again, and saying to the solemn, mysterious night, saying to the stars and to her own soul, what her mother had said to herself so often in the cruellest stress of her own life, —

"Love is most! Love is best!"

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XLI

WHAT SHE WOULD DO WITH HER FORTUNE

THE next afternoon Marjorie set out early, as she had promised Mr. Elderby, for Moose Falls. She was to meet him here the last time before he started for the West.

She was only a little way from the grounds when she saw a small wicker-phaeton coming toward her. When the occupant removed his cap, she recognized him and Hercules. In a few moments the carriage was beside her, and Mr. Elderby had sprung out.

"We are to have our first drive together, Marjorie. Will you get in, please?

"I have been looking out for you for the last three minutes," he said, as they bowled along the sunny old highway, "and grudging every instant because they were all so precious and so few to spare! I must be far away by noon to-morrow."

"And you have heard?"

"How do you know that?"

"I see it in your eyes."

"I telegraphed as soon as I reached Red Ledge. The reply came this morning. They will hold back

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the will from publication until my arrival. But they urge me not to lose a moment. I have spent the morning despatching and receiving telegrams, and others will be awaiting my return. I shall, of course, forward them to you. These were the latest advices when I left."

She went carefully over the papers he handed her. When she had finished he went on to state that he had learned the names of two other trustees appointed by the will. One proved to be a slight acquaintance of his own, the other an old friend of his father's.

They congratulated each other over this fact, and then Marjorie said, —

"How glad I am for this little breathing-spell before the news is given to the four winds!"

"It is not going to turn your head, this huge fortune, my Marjorie?"

"If it did, what a weak head I should have, to be sure!"

He raised his eyebrows. "Sixty millions must be a powerful test of native balance with most human beings."

She laughed, — a laugh that made its old, gay, rippling gladness in the air, a laugh that was to make the music of his life, Jack Elderby thought as he listened.

"That all depends on how one looks at the millions. If one thinks what they would do for one's self simply, they would fill all that very small world.

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But when it comes to others — then the figures no longer crush one. I have been thinking this morning of some people I know whom I can now lift out of the long wear and tear of pecuniary struggles — do it in such ways, too, that though they may suspect, they will never be quite certain whose hand has aided them. But I know perfectly one must not be governed by mere impulse, even with one's generosities. If I have talked in a rather wild way, as though I were going to scatter this wealth broadcast, I did not mean that. I know some kinds of helping are only harmful."

"Unquestionably! And many people satisfy their consciences with insisting they most help the world by spending their wealth on their own pleasures and luxuries."

"How often I have heard that whole ground gone over in my father's library by a group of clever people!" rejoined Marjorie. "I learned early to detect the moral sophism at the heart of that idea. But I think, if I had never heard the name of Political Economy, my own instincts would have taught me 'the difference between productive and unproductive consumption.' So I can never console myself with the thought that my gorgeous dresses, my splendid jewelry, my own personal grandeurs and luxuries, are greatly helping the world. You remember Louis Fourteenth's reply when Madame de Maintenon besought him for arms to relieve the starving people."

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"I can't say I do, Marjorie. But the reply must have been in keeping with the man's character."

"Yes, 'I give alms,' he said, 'by spending largely.'"

"So," rejoined Jack, "he squandered the revenues wrung from his people, and did probably more than any other man to bring his kingdom to the French Revolution, his house to the guillotine."

But the talk did not run long in this vein. The strain and tension of the last days were relaxed now. What a drive that was! They went among the climbing, rambling country roads, which stretched their long brown arms about Old Lanes. The air was penetrated with the rich sweetness of the autumn fields and orchards. The trees held their late green bravely, but the yellows and the scarlets of the September north-land had stolen marches among the low growths, and, like a late wild bloom, were brightening the tangles and bushes of the pastures.

Marjorie's eyes grew luminous as she gazed, and the faint rose-bloom deepened in her cheeks.

"How splendidly Hercules goes in harness!" she said. "How glad I am you thought of this drive to-day!"

"It flashed across me—a blessed inspiration — just before I started. I had been so immersed in telegrams this morning that I hadn't a thought to spare for anything else."

"Yes, I see. You will have to give up all your other clients for me." And again she said, "How

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fortunate it is that you are a lawyer, and know just what is best to do at this crisis!"

"When I made up my mind to go into law, it certainly never entered my wildest dream that I should have a client of sixty millions."

"Any more than it did a few days ago that you were proposing to an heiress!"

"Do you imagine, Marjorie, the world is going to believe that?"

"It will not?"

On that slender neck the head poised itself with superb indignation.

"It will believe — not our friends, of course, but the great, curious, blatant world outside — that I somehow got wind of this fortune, and was shrewd enough to forestall others. You must make up your mind to the newspaper versions of this affair."

She was silent a few moments. Then she said quietly, —

"You and I will know, Jack."

"Yes; we shall know."

They had driven for more than two hours before Marjorie related the talk the night before with Mrs. Cameron.

As she had anticipated, her lover was much disinclined to her remaining at Old Lanes during his absence.

"If I could be near you, it would be a different matter," he reasoned. "But now I shall be away,

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it will be vastly more satisfactory to feel that you are with your friends, Dr. Amoury and Mrs. Ainslee."

"But there are so many people lingering with her into the late autumn. I cling to this quiet, remembering what is to come."

"Doesn't it seem rather absurd, though, to continue your present relations with Mrs. Cameron?"

"It does not strike me in that light. I like to oblige her by remaining a short time. Then it must weigh something in her favor with you, that we met first under her roof."

This last remark suggested a new thought to young Elderby. He had never confessed to Marjorie that he had first heard her voice under the pine-tree with Donil Kemp. Of course he meant to relate all that some time. But the whole scene was too sacred and tender for these flying moments, crowded with so many vital interests, and all their sweetness dashed with the consciousness of the impending separation. So he chose his words carefully.

"I am ready to give Mrs. Cameron ample credit for smoothing the way in our early acquaintance. Only, don't you know, it was for another's sake than hers I first drove over to Cameron Brae?"

Their eyes met and smiled into each other.

"I never suspected that," she said, "until a little while ago."

The result of all this talk was that Jack Elderby finally gave his consent to Marjorie's remaining at

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Old Lanes until Dr. Amoury should come for her in about three weeks.

After this was settled, Marjorie brought up her project of purchasing Sea Knolls.

"No other place," she said, "could be to me what that old home is, though it were a Queen's palace. A fortnight ago I should have thought it boundless bliss to live under that roof — my own once more. I can't see why I should have any desire to live in a grander home simply because I am Uncle Tom's heiress."

Jack Elderby entered enthusiastically into her plan of regaining Sea Knolls. It was of a kind sure to appeal to him. He promised that the first thing he would attend to on his return would be the arrangements for its purchase.

Marjorie dilated on the changes and additions on which she had set her heart.

"But all these will leave the solid old homestead intact. Certainly," she went on, "I delight in beautiful things. I love harmonious colors and furnishings about me, and I shall indulge my tastes at Sea Knolls. I shall want pictures, rare porcelains — a refined and elegant home. Then there is the library — the heart of Sea Knolls, as papa used to call it. But its turn will come later. If I thought first of others, it was not because I intended to exclude myself — ourselves — from a share in Uncle Tom's fortune. You will not have a very easy *rôle*

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of it either, Jack Elderby, taking care of it and — me!"

Some bright jests, some gay repartee, followed.

Amid talk like this the afternoon waned, and Hercules' head had at last to be turned toward Cameron Brae.

"You will never ride over to Old Lanes to see me again!" said Marjorie softly.

The dark eyes which women admired, smiled down on her.

"I came to Red Ledge four months ago, and did not know you were in the world, and now — you are the world to me, Marjorie!"

"And I should have missed you — oh, Jack, I might always have missed you — had it not been for Donil Kemp!"

"Bless the little ragamuffin! I can never repay him!"

"We must get him away from Old Lanes as soon as possible after I leave. He really has no idea that he did anything worth praising. When I speak of it, he listens and stares at me in mute surprise. I am certain, too, he has never mentioned our first meeting — even my name — to the Hearns. What a fine native instinct, what power of reticence, his silence shows! What other boy, brought up as he has been, would not have gabbled about the adventure, and made himself the hero of it, to everybody who would listen? But poor Donil," she added, in

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a different tone, — "whatever better days may be in store for him, he will always carry one misfortune about with him."

"What is that?"

"His gigantic nose!"

Jack laughed. "That was so like a woman," he thought. But Miss Day was always making him laugh, even when, as now, she was serious. "Oh, that won't stand in his way," he replied, in the amused, reasoning man's tone, so effective always with a woman. "When he gets older, and the rest of his starved, solemn face fills out, his nose won't look so portentous."

"That is consoling. I mean, too, that wife of 'Bijah Hearn shall be rescued from his brutality, and see what better fortunes will do for her. I shall have some plan for Matt, too, one of these days. He is the youngest and most hopeful of the masculine Hearns."

The minutes were lessening now. The talk came back to themselves.

"You will write to me, Jack?"

"Every day, my darling."

"Do you see the moon coming over the hill? What a pale, wan ghost of a thing she is now! Yet, in a little while she will ride supreme in her loveliness, the Lady of the Heavens, and the earth will lie in white enchantment under her gaze. I am glad you are to have that moon the first nights of your trip!"

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"Do you know what I always think now when I see the moon?"

"How should I?"

"That you are what the moon is among her stars. You have risen on my life as the moon rises over the rough places, the wastes, the deserts, and floods them with beauty. You have made a new heaven, a new earth, for me, my Marjorie."

They reached the front gate of Cameron Brae. They clung to each other a moment in the strength of their love and the pain of their parting; and then he sprang into the carriage and drove away, saying no word.

But once he looked back and saw her standing there with the sunset light behind her, — a tall, slender figure in gray, — as he had seen her first, standing in the hot road, — seen her from Old Lanes tavern.

His heart thrilled, and he thanked God, as a true man must, for God's best gift — the woman whom he loves, the woman who loves him!

And there was this grace in Jack Elderby: he thought only of herself at that moment, and not of what all the world would soon be talking about — Marjorie Day's Millions.

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